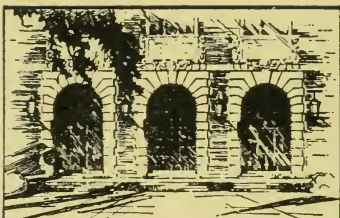


242h
.3






LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
W242h
v.3





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

HERBERT-LODGE;

A

NEW-FOREST STORY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS WARNER,

OF BATH. . . .

VOL. III.

“ Know, we are bound to cast the minds of youth
“ Betimes into the mould of heavenly truth,
“ That taught of God, they may indeed be wise,
“ Nor, ignorantly wandering, miss the skies.”

COWPER.

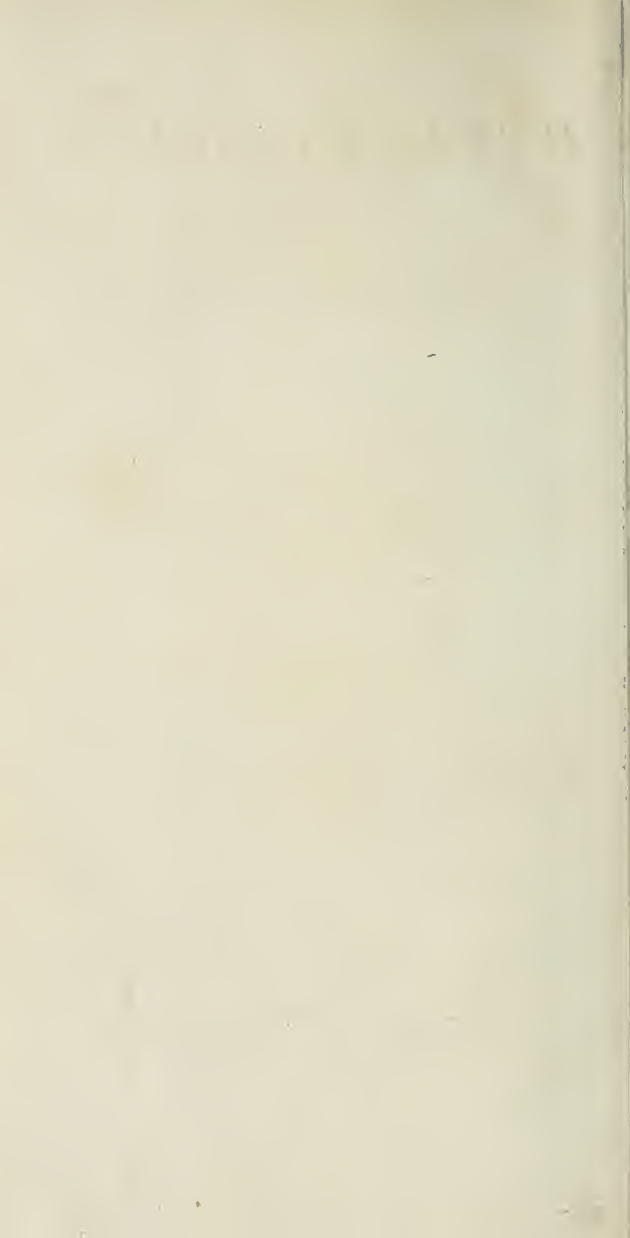
PRINTED BY

RICHARD CRUTTWELL, ST. JAMES'S-STREET, BATH;

AND SOLD BY

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1808.





HERBERT-LODGE.

CHAPTER I.

AS it seemed indispensable that Mary should immediately set out for Hampshire, the following morning was fixed upon for her departure; and a slight indisposition having attacked Mr. Stanmore and confined him, and of course his lady also, still longer to Bath, her only companions were Harriet and a confidential domestic.

As nothing occurred to impede their melancholy journey, they arrived the

same evening at the gate of Herbert-Lodge; where they found Dame Wheatley, who had caught sight of the carriage through the glade, and was waiting to welcome Mary, with tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

“How is my beloved friend, mother, and protectress?” said the affectionate girl, in interrupted accents. “May I hope that Heaven will restore her to my prayers? Will she know her afflicted Mary?”

‘Know you, dear Miss!’ returned the old woman, ‘why she ha’ been wishing to see you ever so long. When I told her just now, I saw the carriage from the window of her bed-room, I thought she would ha’ leaped out of the great chair for joy. ‘I think,’ said she, ‘I could almost find strength to go down to meet her.’

“Heaven’s mercy be ever praised! Ah, let me fly to see her!” exclaimed

Mary, as she leaped from the carriage, and darted like lightning into the house.

In a moment she was at Mrs. Herbert's chamber-door; and the next she enfolded in her arms her more than mother.

Though somewhat amended since Dame Wheatley's letter, Mrs. Herbert's countenance bore strong marks of sickness and sorrow; her person too was thin; and her weakness appeared to be extreme.

A faint blush of joy, however, suffused her cheek, when she felt Mary's embrace, and the sweet smile of love irradiated her features, as she in return pressed her to her bosom, and with eyes uplifted to Heaven, welcomed her safe arrival.

This interview of mutual rapture was only interrupted by the entrance of Miss Stanmore, who received from Mrs. Herbert the most cordial reception.

Of course none of the distressing domestic circumstances which had lately occurred, became the subject of conversation. The young people carefully avoided the mention of Matilda's name, and every other topic which might awaken painful impressions in Mrs. Herbert's mind; and endeavoured to amuse her thoughts by the relation of many of the incidents that had occurred to them since their departure from the Forest.

Amongst these little narratives, Mary did not forget to recount the adventure of the commerce-table, the benevolence of Mr. Winburne, and her own success in bearing away the prize; and concluded her recital with an animated description of the interesting emigrant, on whose account the party had been made; "but," added she, "you shall yourself judge of her taste and ingenuity;" and desired the servant to fetch the box, which was in the seat of the chaise.

Mrs. Herbert had listened with deep attention and evident emotion to Madame Henri's story, and no sooner cast her eye upon the painting on the lid, than she exclaimed, 'Heavens, what a powerful resemblance! Can it be possible that this forsaken fair one?—oh, no; it cannot be; groundless, vain idea!'

As she appeared to be exceedingly affected, Mary did not attempt to press for an explanation of her words; but seeing her fatigued, and thinking that quiet might be necessary after her exertion, she took an affectionate leave for the night, and retired with Harriet to that apartment, which in happier times had been jointly occupied by Matilda and herself.

Her companion, tired with her journey, soon sunk into slumber, and left Mary to silence and meditation.

It was now that the sad changes which had lately occurred rushed upon her

mind with tenfold force. With a sigh that swelled her heart almost to bursting, she recalled to her recollection the happy hours of childhood, when Edmund and his sister equally shared her ardent affection; when she knew herself to be equally dear to both; the companion of all their innocent sports, the soother of their little sorrows, and the beloved partner of all their enjoyments; that delightful period, when

“ Friendship and love seemed tenderly at strife,
 “ Which most should sweeten her unruffled life:”

when pleasure followed her footsteps; and hope, dipping her fairy pencil in futurity, delighted to sketch a flattering perspective of long and durable felicity.

“ Alas!” whispered Mary to herself, “ how dark, how dreary the reverse! The dear protectress of my orphan state reduced perhaps to penury by the extravagance of him who should have been

her surest friend and guardian ! Matilda, the early partner of my affections, a voluntary, and (ah ! Heaven avert the stroke !) perchance a *criminal*, exile from the parental roof ; Edmund a prisoner in distant lands, or (oh, distracting thought !) a lifeless corpse !”

Overcome by the painful feelings excited by these distressing reflections, despair for a moment threatened to seize on Mary’s soul.

On every side nothing but sorrowful images presented themselves, all hope seemed to be excluded, and every source of joy cut off for ever.

But to a mind disciplined as hers had been, these gloomy impressions could not be of long continuance.

The lessons of piety she had early imbibed from her excellent instructress, revived in her bosom. She had been accustomed to trace the finger of merciful Omnipotence in the disposal of all

sublunary events; and even the dark picture that was now before her, faint as the vestiges of good in it might be, she still believed would ultimately be tinged with brighter colours.

She lifted up her heart to heaven in earnest silent prayer, and felt the goodly influence of this tribute of homage to the Father of the universe,

“ Who with an eye of pity views distress,
“ And in his wisdom only fails to bless.”

The gentle dew of peace distilled upon her soul; her heart ceased to beat with the fear of future woes; her spirits became tranquil; her thoughts collected; and after a short time, a sweet sleep gradually stole upon her senses, and locked them up in deep repose.

Awaking early on the following morning, refreshed by her rest, with renewed energy of mind, and a fixed determination to devote all her powers to the solace

and service of Mrs. Herbert; she dressed herself without disturbing Miss Stanmore, and wrapping her pelisse round her, and tying on her bonnet, descended the stairs with an intention of enjoying the calm delight of a solitary walk before breakfast.

The mists of a frosty morning early in February were just dispersing before the cheerful beams of the newly-risen sun.

The frequent report of the fowling-piece, the sprightly tones of the horn, the clamour of the hounds, and the blue smoke which rose in curling columns from the chimneys of the neighbouring cottages, proved, that though luxury chose still to repose on beds of down, the active votaries of rural sport, and the sons of labour, were already entered on their different occupations.

The earth fresh with the dews of night breathed fragrance around; whilst every bush and plant reflected the solar ray

from the innumerable diamond drops that trembled on their heads.

It was a scene to ravish both the ear and eye, which none but those to whom the charms of nature are dear, could paint or imagine :

- “ For who the melodies of morn can tell?
- “ The wild brook babbling down the mountain side ;
- “ The lowing herd, the sheepfold’s simple bell ;
- “ The pipe of early shepherd dim descry’d
- “ In the lone valley ;——
- “ The hum of bees, and linnet’s lay of love ;
- “ And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.”

For Mary all the harmonies and beauties of nature possessed indescribable attractions.

Refinement and fashion had not stripped her of those sensibilities, which sympathise with the joys and sufferings of the subordinate animated world, and draw both instruction and delight from the contemplation of the exquisite organization of vegetable life.

“ Each season of the changeful year” brought with it its peculiar enjoyments to her unsophisticated taste.

It was a volume of diversified entertainment which she studied with increasing gratification, as its interesting pages were successively unfolded to her admiring eye.

As she now trod the spangled lawn, brushed away the dew-drops from the bending grass, and inhaled the fresh perfume of “ the incense-breathing morn,” she felt conscious of new vigour and elasticity of mind; a holy calm possessed her bosom; the little concerns of life seemed to lose their interest; her views took a wider range; the love of “ the All-good, All-perfect, and All-fair,” absorbed her thoughts; and she exclaimed with pious rapture,

“ Father of light and life, thou GOD supreme,

• O teach me what is good, teach me Thyself!

“ Save me from folly, vanity, and vice;

“ From every low pursuit, and feed my soul
 “ With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure,—
 “ Sacred, substantial, never-failing bliss.”

Having wandered for some time thro' the more open parts of the grounds, Mary at length turned towards the flower-garden, and instinctively opened the wicket that led into the gravel-walk, which Mrs. Herbert had formerly allotted for the exercise of the children in damp weather, and which bounded the little plots of ground she had kindly set apart for their own separate cultivation.

The instant she unlatched the wicket and trod the well-known path, the fortitude with which she had stored her mind began to desert her. A thousand tender recollections rushed at once upon her imagination. Not a tree, not a plant presented itself which was not associated, in some shape or other, with the idea of the absent Edmund, and the lost Matilda.

Here, in childhood, she had sported for hours together with these affectionate companions, in all the innocent varieties of juvenile amusement.

In *this* arbour, or in *that* alcove, at a more advanced period of life, Edmund had accompanied her voice with his flute, or whiled away the sultry hours of noon in reading some favourite instructive or amusing author to her.

At the further end of the walk grew a beautiful plane tree, whose widely-spreading branches offered shelter from the sudden storm, or shade from the oppressive heat.

She approached it with palpitating heart; it had heretofore been a favourite retreat; the silent witness of many an interesting conversation between her adopted brother and herself.

A venerable ivy covered its trunk, except where it had been cut away to make room for the effusions of Edmund's

boyish muse, and the nicely-carved lines found shelter under the foliage of a creeping woodbine, which had been planted and trained by their mutual care.

The early year had not yet thrown over them the mantle of leaves which hid them from the eye in the softer seasons ; and Mary easily discovered many specimens of his sportive wit and lively fancy inscribed upon the bark, at that happy age, when every hour was crowned with peace and joy.

She had *then* dwelt with pleasure on the progress of his labour ; enjoyed the sprightly thought as it became embodied under his knife ; and lightened the tediousness of work with her enchanting converse.

But, alas, *at present* she viewed it with far different emotions.

The hand which had traced those characters, might now be mouldering into dust ; the eye that had directed its pro-

gress, might be closed in endless night; the vivacity, the ardour, the enthusiasm of character, which had at once amused her fancy, and interested her heart, might now be extinguished for ever!

A thrilling horror pervaded her frame; the tears coursed each other down her cheek, and she was again fast relapsing into melancholy, when the breakfast-bell sounded in her ear, and by reminding her of the duties she had to perform, awakened her to a sense of the impropriety of indulging an useless grief, and weakening the power of present exertion by wasting her sensibilities and affections on the shadows of departed joys.

Breathing out a prayer to heaven, therefore, for strength and support, she turned from this scene of sad recollections, and hurried towards the house, determined to be firm in herself-imposed task of controuling her own feelings,

that she might be able to administer peace and consolation to the wounded bosom of the bereaved and suffering mother.

CHAPTER II.

THE charm of Mary's society operated upon Mrs. Herbert, as Dame Wheatley had predicted, with the most rapid and beneficial effects; and the return of Dr. Fairford to his living assisted greatly also in promoting her convalescence, by the solace of his conversation, the cheerfulness of his piety, and the wisdom of his advice.

In proportion as her frame gained strength, her mind recovered its custom-

ary tone; and the saint-like smile that dwelt upon her wan features, sufficiently evinced, that whatever her outward circumstances might be, all within was resigned and serene.

Severe, indeed, were the external evils which he had now to encounter.

An account had just reached her, that Matilda was returned to France, under the protection of Lord William ———, one of the most unprincipled profligates of the day.

Of Mr. Herbert, no circumstance had yet occurred to explain his sudden and extraordinary departure; though from the violent agitation he had manifested on receiving the letter that occasioned it, and the suspicions she had before entertained of the fatal consequences of his imprudence, she had every reason to anticipate the intelligence of complete ruin to him, and beggary to herself and family.

Respecting Edmund, also, she was still in painful suspence. The papers gave as yet no account of the action in which the Lively had been engaged, though private reports continued to represent it as a very bloody and disastrous one.

Both Mary and Miss Stanmore (who was still at the Lodge waiting the return of her parents from Bath) participated with Mrs. Herbert in the pain of all these uncertainties, though each, as if by mutual consent, forbore to mention her own apprehensions, from the fear of awakening, or at least increasing, a possibly unfounded terror in the other.

Whilst they were thus a prey to this distressing silent anxiety, they were one morning surprised by the appearance of Dr. Fairford upon the lawn earlier than was customary with him, whose expressive countenance and hurried step manifested the unusual agitation of his

mind, and led the party to anticipate some information from him of calamitous importance.

As he entered the room he drew a letter from his pocket, and approaching Mrs. Herbert, and affectionately taking her hand, “ Prepare, my dear friend,” he cried, “ for the intelligence of one of those awful dispensations of Providence, ‘ which justify the ways of God to man,’ and overwhelm infidelity with the conviction that even on this side the grave the retributive justice of Heaven is ever dispensing appropriate punishments and rewards.”

Pausing for a moment, he continued, “ Your husband is no more! he has fallen a victim to his passions and his vices. May that Being whose omniscience alone can know and make allowances for the weakness of humanity, extend his mercy to a sinner, who, I may

say, has *voluntarily* rushed into the presence of his God!

“ I know, my dear friend, the strength and steadiness of your principles, the sincerity of your piety, and your unbounded submission to the Divine will; and venture at once, therefore, to impart to you a tale of horror, which from a mind less disciplined than yours it might be prudent perhaps to conceal.”

Saying this, he opened the letter, and read as follows.

“ Acquainted as I am, esteemed and reverend sir, with the affectionate interest which you have always taken, in every incident that relates to Mrs. Herbert; who, amiable as I have understood her to be, is, I confess, still more particularly endeared to me by the connection in which she stands to the captivating Miss Wheatley; I deem no apology necessary for troubling you with a detail, the particulars and consequences of

which must, I fear, prove very afflictive to our highly-valued friends.

“ It is necessary to mention to you, that I was hastily summoned from Bath, a short time since, to attend the death-bed of Mr. Monson, whom I must ever blush to call my maternal uncle.

“ I had not seen him since my return to England from a long residence abroad ; and my absence had occasioned me to be a stranger in a great measure to the character of one, whose possessions, I suppose, secured to him that respect and credit, without which I never recollect to have heard him mentioned.

“ The death of this man, however, has unfolded such a scene of villainy, in which Mr. Herbert has been both an actor, and a victim, as I shudder to relate.

But it must be developed ; and who is so capable of softening its horrors, as one whose sacred function and tried

attachment will furnish him with the power of consoling the innocent sufferers, and supporting them under the tide of calamity which is preparing to overwhelm them.

“To you, sir, therefore, I beg to delegate the task of communicating to Mrs. Herbert the afflictive intelligence of her husband’s guilt, and the utter ruin of his fortune.

“Even while I am thus taking upon myself the painful business of stating undisputed facts, I tremble to reflect on the atrocity of a man, who, when affecting with exalted generosity to sacrifice all pecuniary considerations to the gratification of a sincere and interested passion, was deliberately adopting a step, which not only deprived him of every claim to the character of common honesty, but by which he knew he must eventually ruin the woman he pretended to adore.

“ Can it be, that a man, who in a moment would have resented the slightest attack upon his *honour* at the hazard of his life, should have stained that honour for ever by imposing upon Sir Charles Fitzmordaunt a false statement of his circumstances, when suing for the hand of his lovely sister, whose person he despaired of obtaining on any other terms than those of matrimony?

“ Before this period, however, Herbert-Lodge (which he went through the mockery of settling on his intended bride) had been mortgaged for even *more* than its value; and to this horrible imposition, I am constrained to acknowledge, my late uncle was accessory.

By the assistance of Mr. Monson, Mr. Herbert was enabled to maintain the appearance of affluence in England, and of princely prodigality in France, where for a great part of the year he resided, attracted, it seems, by the charms of a

lady whose name delicacy obliges me to leave to your conjecture ; and this at the very time when his affairs were in reality deeply involved.

“ As any exigency arose, however, he applied to this ready friend for means of extrication, who cheerfully supplied them ; weaving still closer by every additional advance the web he was preparing for the infatuated wretch, who soon became the ruined victim of the man he trusted.

“ Mr. Monson had a daughter ; *had*, I say, for Heaven thought fit to punish him by the sudden death of this idol a short time since ; for whose sake (I am willing to believe) rather than his own, he lost sight of the ties of honour, and the obligations of conscience, in the anxious wish to accumulate a fortune.

“ This girl was intended to be the wife of Herbert’s son ; and the interests of the two families being thus united, the

father's debt was to be liquidated, and a large sum advanced to him besides, in lieu of part of the marriage portion of Charlotte Monson.

“The young man, however, it seems, could not feel that sentiment for the lady, which he had inspired in *her* bosom ; and therefore peremptorily refused her offered hand : a refusal which threw Herbert into the most distressing embarrassment, as he was thereby disappointed of the sum which his necessities required.

“With consummate hypocrisy, however, affecting feelings which he did not suffer, he wrought upon the generosity of his son to relinquish in his favour the whole of his fortune, excepting a few hundred pounds, with which the youth purchased a commission in the regiment that he accompanied to India.

“But even the money raised by these iniquitous measures could scarcely have

supplied the most clamorous of his creditors, and by no means have provided for the demands of all.

“ Herbert therefore applied but a small portion of it to the liquidation of his debts, and quickly dissipated the remainder in his customary pleasures.

“ The consequence was, he soon found himself more deeply involved than ever, and immediately adopted another equally unjustifiable scheme to avert approaching ruin.

“ You perceive, sir, I write freely to you on this unhappy subject, under the idea that you are even better acquainted with many incidents relating to the wretched man’s conduct, than I can be supposed to be from Mr. Monson’s relation of them.

“ He informed me, sir, that the present plan of Mr. Herbert was to marry his daughter to Sir Nimrod Heartley ; who had promised to advance to him a

considerable sum of money on the day of the nuptials.

“The circumstance, however, of Matilda Herbert’s running away with Lord William —, had entirely frustrated all his hopes in this quarter, and cut off the last chance which remained to him of saving himself from the hands of his impatient creditors.

“In the mean time, sir, my uncle being, as he said, enraged at some circumstances in the conduct of Mr. Herbert, (the particulars of which, I believe, were only of importance to themselves,) renounced all friendly connection with him, and became his bitterest enemy.

“A letter to this effect, and full of threats of immediate arrest upon his bonds, and foreclosure of the Hampshire estates, reached Mr. Herbert at the Lodge just when he was recovering from a dangerous indisposition.

“In a paroxysm of rage and despair he threw himself into a post-chaise, and hurried to London for the advice and assistance of a voracious pettyfogging attorney, whom he had also frequently employed in his dark and ruinous money transactions.

“It was some days before he could see Mr. Gripe ; an interval which Herbert passed in agitation bordering on distraction. When he obtained an interview, this confidential friend perceiving at a single glance that the career of Mr. Herbert was drawing to a close, threw off the mask, and instead of the sycophantish sympathy which he had been accustomed to express on occasions of similar distress, he declared without ceremony that he could assist him no more ; that his own demand upon him was large ; that he was in great want of money himself ; and therefore, instead of further supplies, he must insist

upon an immediate liquidation of the bill that was due to him.

“In one moment Herbert perceived that he was irreparably ruined.

“The two people who had hitherto furnished him with the means of his expences, were now his most merciless creditors, and no refuge remained to which he could look for further aid.

“Maddened with the reflection, he rushed abruptly from Gripe’s house; and with the few guineas which his purse contained, hastened to the hazard-table, determined to make one last and desperate effort to retrieve his falling fortunes.

“For a time success crowned every throw; his winnings accumulated, and with the levity natural to his character, the despair to which he had been a prey was quickly converted into exultation.

“Wine, as usual, stood on the side-board, the more effectually to banish reason, and heighten the madness of the

scene; and Herbert, in the triumph of his heart, called for repeated bumpers.

“By degrees, his head became confused, and his hand unsteady.

“Fortune now seemed to withdraw her smiles; and a repetition of considerable losses, chequered by occasional trifling successes, rouzed up again the violent passions of his soul, and plunged him once more into desperation.

“The larger his losses were, the deeper became his bets.

“His opposite neighbour, an officer in the army, had been his most successful antagonist; and double or quits upon a large stake not only made Herbert a beggar of every guinea, but dipped him also deeply in debt to this more cautious and fortunate opponent.

“Inflamed almost to insanity by the event of the cast, Herbert instantly accused the winner of cheating; and swore

that he had obtained his success by a false throw.

“ A challenge was the consequence. The parties left the room, and immediately prepared to decide their quarrel.

“ At the first fire Herbert received a wound in the breast, which the surgeon, on being called in, pronounced to be mortal.

“ The unhappy man, it appears, was transfixed with horror at the information; and being conveyed to a bed in the same house, he dispatched a messenger to my uncle, requesting his immediate attendance on him.

“ Before the man arrived at the house, however, Mr. Monson had fallen a victim to the disorder which summoned me to town, and breathed his last in a deep penitence, that I trust will be accepted at the throne of mercy.

“ As he had previously made me acquainted with all the transactions be-

tween Mr. Herbert and himself, I deemed it proper, as his executor and representative, to obey the summons of the dying man.

“But, ah! my dear sir, how shall I recount the particulars of the scene that there awaited me?

“A few hours of solitude and silence, and the certain prospect of a speedy change of existence, had effected an awful revolution in the mind of *him*, whom I had heard described as the proud, the gay, the gallant libertine.

“His face was pale, and his look haggard and terrified.

“The world, and all its idolized pleasures, were fast receding from his darkened vision; and though his present sufferings were dreadful, yet his attention seemed chiefly to be occupied with what was to succeed their termination; with the scene that would open upon his astonished spirit, when the taper of life

which now supported but a feeble flame, should be extinguished.

“ His awakened conscience had painted to him the most horrible pictures of futurity; and he already anticipated the punishment of his abandoned licentiousness.

“ The messenger returning from Mr. Monson’s house had communicated to him the death of that gentleman, and my intention of waiting on him immediately. He expected my arrival, therefore, and on my entrance into the room, with a look of inexpressible anguish beckoned me to approach the bed on which he lay.

“ Seizing my hand with convulsive force, while the shades of death overspread his livid face, and every feature was distorted with soul-racking agony, ‘ Oh!’ exclaimed he in a sepulchral tone, ‘ oh, dreadful proofs of the existence of that Providence which I have

so often derided and denied; oh, awful examples of those judgments of a just God, which till now I have so madly despised.

‘ See,’ continued he, whilst his frame shivered with horror, ‘ see, in the sudden summons of your uncle, and the fearful end of myself, two warning instances of that divine vengeance, which with impious senseless boldness we both have affected to defy.

‘ Ah! what avail us now our atheistic boasts, and proud rebellion against Heaven? I see, I feel, there is a righteous God, whose sentence I must listen to, whose terrors I must suffer.

‘ Ah! how shall I appear before his bar? Where shall I hide my head against his thunders? His mercy, I have heard, is great; but, oh! can it extend to such a wretch as me?—I, who have broken all his laws, scorned all his threats, and spurned all his promises;

I, who have ruined my *wife*, my *children*, and *myself*?

‘You *weep*,’ he proceeded, observing the tears which I found it impossible to restrain. ‘Ah! would I could shed a single drop—but my eyes are dry, though my poor brain is on fire. Oh, God! ’twill burst with agony! ’Tis gone, ’tis gone,’ he shrieked out, (pressing violently his hand upon his forehead, as if the seat of reason were at that moment overthrown by the horrid recollections that rushed upon his mind;) and bursting into a wild maniacal laugh, ‘Ha! ha! ha!’ he cried, ‘they come; they are here; but I shall still foil them, and escape—What; my wife too, and Edmund?—No, no; he must not sink; save, oh, save!’

“A spasmodic shivering now shook his every nerve, and left him in a state of insensibility, which, for a few minutes, we believed to be death,

“After a time, however, he again awoke to fresh pain and accumulated horrors.

“Indeed it is impossible for me to describe the various shapes which conscience assumed to torture and appal him, or the different terrible forms in which every surrounding object appeared to his distempered fancy.

“At length, suddenly starting up, and looking wildly round, he turned to that side of the bed where I sat gazing on him with compassionate earnestness, and in the voice and manner of mental derangement, ‘What,’ said he, ‘Fitzmordaunt, thou brother of my ruined wife; art thou come too, to harrow up my soul, and upbraid my cruelty? Why dost thou pierce me with that reproachful look? Alas! ’tis now too late for me to struggle for her support. No! from *your* hands I received her—to *your* guardianship I commend her. She must

not crawl, and cringe, and supplicate the precarious bounty of strangers. I leave her, 'tis true, without a morsel of bread ! But surely *you*, Charles, you will not let her want ! Speak ; will you not succour, will you not protect the deserted Caroline ? *Promise* me, Fitzmordaunt ; or heaven blast your tongue for ever.'

“ Saying this, he fixed his glaring eyes upon me with such an earnest gaze—*Ought* I to have undeceived him, had it been possible ? I could not make the trial ; but pressing his burning hand with fervour to my lips, My friend, cried I, your wishes shall be obeyed ; to the utmost of my power, I'll serve your angel wife.

“ ‘ *Swear* it,’ returned Herbert, in a voice of hollow dissonance.

“ I swear it, most solemnly, I repeated.

“ ‘ Then all I have to do is to cry for mercy. Oh, God !’—

“These were his last words: a convulsive struggle rent asunder the last ligament of life, and in a deepened groan of anguish the soul of the libertine Herbert fled to ‘that country, from whose bourne no traveller returns.’

“You will readily believe, sir, that such a series of events as I have taken the liberty of relating to you, must have much agitated, perplexed, and distressed me; but amongst all the emotions they excited, the desire of fulfilling the promise which I made to the unhappy Herbert, has been the paramount one.

“It was a solemn engagement, and I will solemnly fulfil it.

“Independently, indeed, of such a conscientious obligation, the knowledge of the iniquitous means by which my uncle became entitled to the Hampshire property of this wretched man, would be a sufficient reason for me to shrink from retaining it a moment, after it was

in my power to restore it to those from whom it had been so unjustly torn.

“ I am willing too, to believe, that in doing this I am only fulfilling a debt of equity, which Mr. Monson himself might have been induced to perform had he recovered from his last indisposition, and witnessed the havock which his chicanery had occasioned.

“ The communication of these circumstances to Mrs. Herbert, I commit entirely to your discretion and delicacy: all I have to request is, that it be so managed as to leave no impression upon her mind, of her being under the shadow of an obligation to *me*.

“ If indeed my heart do not deceive me, I feel persuaded, that under *any* circumstances I should act in the same manner, even were I a stranger to the whole of Mrs. Herbert’s family. But as it is, I candidly acknowledge, that I have an additional motive, in the ardent

attachment which my bosom confesses for her lovely ward.

“ Yes, dear sir, presumptuous hope, even at this moment, points to that happy hour, when the restraint which delicacy for a time imposes may be removed, and leave me at liberty to sue for the right of fulfilling my engagement to the dying Herbert, to assist and protect his wife, in the character of friend, guardian, and husband to the incomparable Miss Wheatley.

“ Once more, sir, I intreat your pardon for my intrusion on your time, and the prolixity of my narrative; and add the hope, that an acquaintance thus commenced may improve under brighter auspices.

“ In the mean time, I shall wait any directions you may deem it proper to favour me with, respecting the funeral.

“ I must, however, take the liberty of observing, that I have already made

such arrangements, as will (if you do not disapprove them) enable us to conduct it in such a manner as to spare Mrs. Herbert the distress of at all interfering on the occasion.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Dear and reverend sir,

“ Your respectful and obedient servant,

“ FERDINAND FORTESCUE.”

“ Can we be so blind, my dear friend,” continued Dr. Fairford, having read and closed the letter, “ as not to acknowledge the operations of a wise, just, and good Providence, in the events which this excellent man has related to us? And confessing this, shall we not humbly bend to its decrees, and rest satisfied with its ordinances?”

“ Your part, I must confess, is a difficult one to support; and the line of

conduct you are to pursue, a delicate one to decide upon. But that piety which has hitherto been your solace and protection under every trial, will not desert you on the present occasion ; and your admirable judgment and generous feelings will conduct you with ease and propriety through any intricacies which may present themselves in the present critical situation of your affairs.

“ As far as my experience and friendship may be able to render you any assistance, it is not necessary for me to say, they shall be devoted to your service. At present, perhaps, the most acceptable thing I can do, will be to leave you to the free and unrestrained expression of your feelings.”

Saying this, the benevolent man took an affectionate farewell of the party, and returned to the rectory, his mind greatly relieved at having communicated the sad events to Mrs. Herbert ; and at the

exemplary resignation with which she appeared to sustain the shock.

The intelligence, indeed, had pained her in the most sensible manner; but her mind was too well disciplined to permit any indications of wild impatience to escape her.

Nor, had she been less collected, could she have felt that species of tumultuous grief, which arises from the sudden abruption of felicity, when the objects of the heart's best affections are for ever removed from its grasp; and which the steadiest principle can hardly controul.

The sweet attachment that grows out of an union of sentiment, she had never experienced for Mr. Herbert. Her *heart* therefore could feel no deprivation when her union with him was rent asunder; but the idea of his sudden removal into eternity, "with all his imperfections on his head," was still a most distressing consideration to her kind and benevolent

mind ; and she felt an emotion of the sharpest anguish in the contemplation of the consequences which such a life of impious profligacy as Herbert's must inevitably induce.

Her perplexity, also, at the conduct of Mr. Fortescue was extreme; and though his unparalleled generosity awakened her warmest emotions of gratitude, yet at the same time she felt it would be impossible to avail herself of it.

She could not for a moment suspect, indeed, that his avowed affection for Mary had suggested a step, which his own noble heart, independently of that feeling, would have prompted him to adopt; but delicacy naturally took alarm at any thing that bore the most distant resemblance to an implied condition; and as she did not conceive it probable that Mary should entertain any sentiment favourable to the wishes of Mr. Fortescue, the impracticability of her

allowing herself to be obliged to him became more apparent.

She was resolved, however, to sound her ward upon the subject, that she might do nothing hastily, in a case where the happiness and comfort of more than one were interested; and to regulate Dr. Fairford's answer to Mr. Fortescue according to the result of her enquiries.

In the course of a day or two, Mrs. Herbert, with every mark of her customary affection, mentioned the subject to Mary.

She enumerated the advantages that might be expected from her matrimonial connection with Mr. Fortescue; a gentleman of such respectable character, delicacy of feeling, nobleness of mind, and affluent situation in life.

“That he entertains for *you*, my dear child, the warmest and sincerest affection, there cannot be a doubt; and should you feel a reciprocal attachment to him,

I see nothing to obscure the prospect of your future happiness with him. In that case, too, there might perhaps be no impropriety in my accepting the munificent favour which he proposes to confer upon me. But, I must confess, that, under *different circumstances*, I should not feel it right to lay myself under such a weight of obligation to a stranger."

Mrs. Herbert here paused for an answer; and Mary, having gazed at her a few minutes in silence, in a voice half choaked with tears, assured her, she would be guided entirely, in this and every other action of her life, by the will of one to whom she was bound by the sincerest love, gratitude, and respect.

'It is my only ambition, dearest madam, to imitate the excellence which your example sets before me. Oh, teach me how I can best contribute to your happiness, and enhance your comfort. You *cannot* recommend a step, which I

ought not to pursue ; and whatever be your wishes on this or any other subject, rest assured that my felicity will always be found in my ready compliance with them.’

“ Ah, dearest girl !” replied Mrs. Herbert, “ beware of what you say. Make no inconsiderate promise in an affair of such importance as the present. Let me first request you to enquire of your *heart*, whether Mr. Fortescue hold *that* place in its affections which a *husband*——”

‘ Spare me, oh, spare me, dearest Mrs. Herbert !’ cried Mary, clasping her hands, and shuddering as she spoke ; ‘ Mr. Fortescue possesses all that esteem, all that friendship can give ; but—’ for a moment she continued silent, whilst the tears rolled down her cheek, and then added, in a firmer voice, ‘ yet, if by the sacrifice of *my own* feelings I can ensure the future tranquillity of *yours*, my

friend, my protectress, my more than mother—if I can conduce to the sweet repose of that life, which has hitherto been spent in making me and others happy, whilst itself has suffered all the cruel severities of fortune,—I will not hesitate a moment. Nothing shall weigh with me in opposition to your ease and satisfaction. And oh, that any offering of *my* peace could at all compensate for those miseries which you have suffered.’

“ My dear Mary,” replied Mrs. Herbert solemnly, whilst she wiped away the obtrusive tear, “ recollect that we are all in the hands and at the disposal of that Providence, which is ever working for the *good* of its creatures, and which marks out the walk through life, that each is to pursue, with equal wisdom and beneficence. Shall we refuse then to go forwards in the way that is allotted us, with cheerfulness and contentment,

because it happens to offer less charms to our imagination, or fewer objects of enjoyment to our passions, than we could desire?

“ *My path, I confess, has sometimes been more obstructed with thorns than beautified with roses; but still I am conscious, that, whatever my trials might be, it is good for me that I have experienced them.*

“ They have, I trust, corrected my heart, and disciplined my mind. They have taught me to estimate external circumstances at their proper value, and to place my happiness on something beyond the reach of temporal fortune. They have taught me, my love, to be satisfied with a small portion of the gifts of prosperity; and,” continued she, catching Mary to her bosom, “ to suffer every privation that misfortune can inflict, rather than purchase all that

affluence could bestow, at the price of one pang to such a heart as yours."

After a moment's pause, "Let me not hear," she proceeded, "a word in reply. I have learned as much as I wished to know, of your sentiments with respect to Mr. Fortescue; and am now decided how to act."

Mary was incapable of answering, even had she not been prohibited from it.

Her bosom swelled with conflicting emotions, but gratitude to Mrs. Herbert was the predominant one; and whilst she returned her tender embrace with enthusiastic warmth, she offered the incense of a prayer to heaven, that she might never prove undeserving of her generous love.

As it became necessary for her to make some immediate arrangements, consistent with the humble situation to which she was now reduced, Mrs. Herbert (as soon as Dr. Fairford had returned an

answer to Mr. Fortescue, declining a proof of generosity which her feelings would not allow her to accept) quitted the Lodge, and removed with Mary to the house of Mr. Stanmore.

This hospitable friend had been apprized by Harriet of the changes which had occurred, and with the instant concurrence of his lady, wrote to request, that the party would take shelter without delay at the Manor, and wait there the return of himself and Mrs. Stanmore, which he informed them would be speedy, as his health was now completely re-established.

He added, that Mrs. Stanmore would bring Madame Henri to the Manor, with whom Mr. Winburne had made her acquainted, whose engaging manners had exceedingly interested her in her favour; and whose desolate situation, since the death of the old priest, (for he had been released a few days before,) claimed more

than ever the compassion of those who had hearts to sympathize with the distresses of unmerited suffering, and generosity and ability to relieve them.

At Stanmore Manor, Mrs. Herbert proposed to remain till the return of Sir Charles Fitzmordaunt to England, who, though little had been heard from him since the death of his lady, was soon expected at Fitzmordaunt-castle to give directions for some material necessary repairs in that fabrick; and painful as it might be to her to solicit assistance from one whom she could not recollect without horror, yet she considered it as a duty imposed upon her by her affection for Mary, for whom she knew not how to provide, unless by interesting the baronet in their favour.

Matilda too was ever in her thoughts; but she had deserted the bosom of her mother, and chosen a protector for herself.

Mrs. Herbert could only therefore drop the tear of maternal anguish over her recollection, and lift up her heart in secret aspirations to heaven for her innocence and safety. No tidings had reached the Lodge since her flight, of the place of her retreat, nor the circumstances of her situation.

She only knew the dreadful certainty, that her daughter had left her native land with one of the most unprincipled of fashionable libertines, and flown to a country that was a scene of horror, anarchy, and blood.

On Edmund's account, also, her mind continued to be racked with suspense, and day succeeded day without any certain intelligence arriving to lessen her anxiety ; whilst to complete her cup of sorrow, an unusual silence on the part of Henry excited the cruel apprehension, that some misfortune had rob-

bed her of the only brother on whose love and friendship she could securely depend.

CHAPTER III.

THE fears of Mrs. Herbert on account of Henry were not, indeed, entirely unfounded; they had, however, considerably exceeded the bounds which reality authorized.

He was still living, though under circumstances of calamity and suffering; and whilst his sister's heart throbbed with the sorrows we have just related, he experienced all the horrors of captivity in one of the most loathsome and crowded prisons of France.

Shortly after the last of his letters to Mrs. Herbert, in which he had painted in language more than commonly animated, his situation with his uncle in America, as exactly calculated to soothe the cares that still rankled in his breast; and had described himself as experiencing from his affection all the solace that benevolence could bestow, a fatal reverse suddenly dispersed his visions of tranquillity.

The yellow fever attacked Mr. Morton, and in three days from his seizure he was a lifeless corpse.

The shock affected Henry in the most sensible manner. A feeling of desolation took possession of his mind, and he was fast sinking into the gloom of despondency, when the recollection of his duties as a Christian and a man again animated him to exertion, and determined him to seek in scenes of activity and employment a cure for the

mental malady which had begun to attack him.

For this purpose he resolved to make a personal visit to those mercantile houses in different parts of Europe, which had been commercially connected with his late uncle, to settle new correspondences with them; and having amused his mind with contemplating the various objects of curiosity his tour would offer, to return again to America, and resume the busy avocations in which he had been before engaged.

To France he naturally first directed his steps.

It was a country to which his heart was bound by the tenderest associations.

It was *there* he had first seen his Adelaide; it was *there* he had been united to his departed saint in the holy bands of wedlock; and he persuaded himself that in the sweet recollections which the scenes of his former felicity would ex-

cite, he should receive a gratification which nothing else on earth could now administer to his mind.

Another though a subordinate motive also influenced his making France the first object of his attention.

The Revolution had now taken place, and presented a most interesting spectacle to the contemplative mind. A great people having burst the chains of bondage which ages had riveted upon them, were making the grandest political experiment that the world had hitherto been witness of.

The quick succession of events, the unexpected vicissitudes, the variety of character, and the developement of talent, which such a convulsion must necessarily produce, all promised to open unbounded sources of consideration and reflection to Henry; and as he would be merely a quiet and speculative observer of the tempest, he had not the least

apprehension that any of its effects could be felt by him.

The system of terror, however, had commenced in Paris, and its wild excesses were following each other in rapid succession at the time of Henry's arrival there.

One massacre pursued another, and the dreadful scenes of carnage which were daily displayed before his eyes, whilst they inspired him with horror and disgust, convinced him that no domination is so fruitful of misery and destructive of happiness as the government of the mob; with whom the sudden impulses of passion are the only principles of conduct, and ignorance and prejudice the only rules of judgment.

Though an inveterate dislike of the English was general at this time in Paris, yet Henry, being considered as an American citizen, continued for some time to be unmolested; and remained a quiet,

though melancholy spectator of those human sacrifices, which, on pretence of state offences, were daily offered up on the shrine of private pique, rancorous malice, and determined revenge.

But although he was thus, to all appearance, without the sphere of that vortex of misery which appeared on all sides of him, yet an accidental circumstance at length involved him in the gulph, and threatened to close a life which had been little else than an unvaried tissue of disaster and suffering.

As he was one day crossing the Square of Louis XV. (afterwards called the Square of Concord) which was even yet moist with the blood of the unfortunate royal pair of France, and an innumerable list of their friends and adherents, the soul-harrowing sound of the well-known *tocsin* suddenly rang in his ears. Enquiring the cause of a passing stranger, he was informed, that a *ci-devant*

nobleman had been just condemned by the tribunal, and was now in the hands of the mob, who were dragging him to the square in order to dispatch him at the guillotine.

Henry, heaving a sigh for the unfortunate unknown, immediately took a different direction to that in which he supposed the mob might be found, willing to avoid the sight of misery that he knew he was unable to relieve.

When however he had almost reached the end of the narrow street through which he was intending to escape from the square, he perceived with the most painful surprize that he had taken a wrong route, and instead of avoiding the murderous crew, he had unfortunately followed that which led directly towards them.

To attempt to fly was now in vain ; in a moment he was surrounded by the tumultuous mob, and borne along by the

irresistible torrent into the centre of the square which he had quitted only a few minutes before.

In a short time the unruly multitude approached the fatal instrument, which was to close their victim's scene of suffering; and Henry, whose situation had been frequently shifted by the struggles and pressure of those around him, now found himself within a very little distance of the unfortunate nobleman; but his head was inclined towards the earth in hopeless despondency, and it was impossible to gain even a glimpse at his features.

At length a discordant yell from the mob announced their arrival at the guillotine.

The prisoner, electrified as it were by the stunning dissonance of the cry, lifted up his face in wild affright, and discovered to the astonished Henry the well-known features of the Marquis de

Bourdon, the father of his Adelaide, the accessory to the murder of his wife.

In a moment a tide of the most tumultuous emotions rushed into his soul; his heart throbbed, his knees trembled under him, and large drops of sweat rolled down his face.

The injuries which the inhuman parent had heaped upon his head, recurred to his recollection. His dying Adelaide, his ruined hopes of happiness, slavery, and torture, banishment, and poverty, all presented themselves to his imagination, and instantaneously rekindled those feelings of rage and resentment against his persecutors, which his bosom had so long forgotten.

A transient emotion of joy flashed through his mind at the contemplation of the ruined marquis, and he instinctively exclaimed, "Our hour of retribution is arrived! Adelaide! our wrongs

are not forgotten. Now are we indeed avenged!"

At the sound of the well-remembered voice the prisoner turned his eye towards the speaker; and Henry at once perceived in its supplicating expression, as well as in the crimson that flushed the wan cheek of the fallen De Bourdon, the sorrows of penitence, and the misery of conscious guilt.

That brow on which ambition, power, and affluence, had stamped their own peculiar characters, was now dejected and humiliated; its deep wrinkles, shaded by a few thinly-scattered silver locks, which formed the only covering for his aged head. Big tears silently coursed each other down his furrowed cheek; and his bent body was sinking by the united pressure of calamity and age.

A momentary contemplation of this man of sorrow, disarmed the bosom of Henry of every resentful feeling.

His soul was incapable of triumphing over the unfortunate, and he melted into tenderness at the sad and altered form before him.

The mild principles of the religion too, that had been the rule of his life, as well as the standard of his faith, recurred to his thoughts ; and the forgiving character of its Divine Founder, which was to be his model, suggested an example of compassion upon the present occasion.

He reprobated himself for the momentary desire of vengeance he had experienced ; and panted to approach the prisoner, assure him of forgiveness, and speak peace and comfort to his soul, before he should be launched into eternity.

As he strove to press through the thick circle which surrounded De Bourdon for this benevolent purpose, a shrill female cry of ‘ Save the Marquis, citizens,

he is innocent. Save, oh save !' rang upon his ear.

At the sound, Henry panted with surprise, and gasped for breath.

“ Oh, God !” said he, “ is it not the voice of Adelaide ? are they not the words of my long-lost wife, supplicating for her father ? Oh, let me hear once more the heavenly sound.”

He now strained his attention to the most painful pitch ; but in vain. His ear only met the confused clamour of the maddened multitude, who had brought their victim to the scene of his execution.

“ No,” said Henry to himself, “ it was not a mortal voice. The spirit of my Adelaide, bending from heaven, called to her faithful Henry, to strive to save her parent from the hands of murderous ruffians. I hear thy call, departed saint, and will fulfil it.”

As he whispered this, he snatched a club from one of the mob who stood

next to him, and rushing forward with an impetuosity which nothing could resist, quickly broke through the band that surrounded De Bourdon, and seized his clay-cold hand.

“Citizens,” cried he, in a voice of anguish and despair, “he must not die. By Heaven, the Marquis is not guilty. Let *me* be your victim in his room ; and spare the grey hairs of an innocent old man.”

‘Secure the English aristocrat, who would arrest the course of justice ;’ exclaimed one of the party that followed close behind the Marquis, who at the same moment plunged a poignard in the side of Henry, which fortunately glanced against the ribs, and only occasioned a severe gash.

“Good God ! a *brother’s* voice and hand !” said Henry, as he turned to see who had inflicted the wound ; “can nature be so entirely subdued ?”

The eye of the base assassin Fitzmordaunt shrunk from his glance, but he still continued to cry out, 'secure the traitor.'

In a moment, 'traitor, aristocrat, Englishman,' echoed from an hundred mouths; and as many hands seized the unfortunate Henry.

Staggered by the blow he had received, and overpowered by numbers, he soon sunk to the ground; the Marquis's hand was torn from his grasp; but with his parting look he caught these mysterious words: 'Brother—deceived; Adelaide confined—separated—alive in France.'

As the unhappy victim of popular rage was led off to the guillotine, some of the party conducted Henry, bleeding and languid with his wound, to the prison of the Conciergerie, to be reserved for one of those mock trials so common at that time, which added insult to murder;

and though they generally preceded sentence, never averted death.

But though condemned here to a privation of every comfort, his mind was occupied with too interesting a subject, to allow it to become a prey to despondency.

The last broken words of the Marquis were perpetually occurring to him.

They seemed to hold out the flattering hope that Adelaide was still in being; and if no chance of escape for himself appeared, yet the thoughts of her having been saved from the horrid death to which he conceived she had been a victim, of her still being an inhabitant of the same world with himself, seemed to render his own fate an unimportant trifle.

Happy, indeed, was it for Henry, that his mind could feast upon a subject which appeared to be sufficient for all its attention; since the scene around

him was only such as could inspire despair.

The grated room to which he had been consigned, was already nearly filled with other prisoners, whose numbers would soon have been too large for the space allotted them, had not the bloody tyranny of the execrable Robespierre daily thinned the crowd, by selecting from it those whom his capricious cruelty doomed to die.

Every hour was his dreadful mandate expected to arrive ; and none of the wretched group could anticipate who next should fall a victim to his rage.

On the morning after Henry's confinement the deep tone of the tocsin announced the speedy entrance of a messenger for more objects of slaughter.

The sad companions of affliction looked round upon each other with silent horror ; and in each countenance was marked

the dread of the lot of death falling upon himself.

Henry, too, partook of the expectation but not of the alarm. The fortitude which conscious rectitude and genuine piety inspire, combined with the pleasing hope of Adelaide's safety, seemed to elevate him above the fear of death, and preserved him tranquil and serene upon his own account, tho' he could not refuse the tear of pity to the unhappy sufferers around him.

He could now receive with calmness that summons into eternity, which each succeeding hour rendered it more probable he should hear; and having with every exercise of piety and resignation prepared himself to meet a fate that seemed inevitable; a fate, however, to which he was assured the immortal spark within would rise superior; with a sentiment nearly allied to pleasure, he anticipated the moment when the friendly

hand of the executioner should commit “the irreparable act that alone gives man a power over eternity;” that act which would close the persecutions of his enemy, and place him far beyond the reach of human suffering, in the regions “where time, and chance, and death expire;” where he would soon be joined by the spirit of his Adelaide; and joined to part no more.

He felt too that he could even forgive his brother’s last act of malice; and offer up a prayer for the penitence and acceptance of his murderer.

In this situation Henry continued for some weeks, suffering with patience every discomfort which a crowded prison room, and a painful wound, could produce; and tranquilly expecting the summons that should lead him to a public and ignominious death.

He had, however, been drawn from a contemplation of his state for a day or

two past, by a circumstance that equally awakened his curiosity, and interested his feelings.

Adjoining to the large apartment to which he had been condemned, was connected one of much smaller dimensions, low, damp, and gloomy; and only receiving an imperfect and partial light from the adjoining room, which was admitted through a square hole guarded with thick iron bars.

For some time after Henry's imprisonment, this chamber had been without any inhabitant; and he had generally taken his post as near to it as possible, that he might enjoy the trifling circulation of air which the aperture produced.

One morning, after the customary sound of the tocsin, its iron door grated harshly on the hinge, and a prisoner, heavily chained, was pushed rudely into the cell. The faint light that glimmered through the grating enabled him to per-

ceive that the unhappy man wore the English uniform; that he was of graceful person, and apparently in the bloom of life.

No sooner was the thundering lock turned upon the prisoner, than he sank upon the floor, and uttered a groan, that in a moment awakened every sensibility in the soul of Mr. Fitzmordaunt. A secret sympathy united him at once to the suffering youth, and an earnest wish to console his sorrows spontaneously sprang up in his bosom.

After giving a few minutes, therefore, to the sacredness of his grief, he addressed him in the kindest accents, and with every expression of friendly commiseration assured him nothing would so much lighten the pressure of his own misfortunes, as the power or opportunity of removing his.

Hearing himself addressed in the language of his country, the youth raised

his head from the hand on which it was reclined, and returned an answer of grateful politeness; but added, that his heart was too much burthened for conversation, and that he must beg the privilege of indulging his grief in silence and uninterrupted.

Thus saying, he again resumed his posture of disconsolation; and kissing with ardour a miniature which hung at his breast, heaved a sigh of anguish.

This determined taciturnity of the young prisoner, which he maintained for two days after his confinement, produced in Henry the most sensible mortification; and rather increased than diminished the desire which he had at first felt of affording him comfort.

Whilst, however, he was planning some method by which he might engage him to his confidence, a circumstance occurred that gave a new and unexpected turn to his own fortunes, and

those of the object of his present solitude.

The hour of midnight was arrived, and his fellow prisoners lay stretched in troubled sleep around him, whilst Mr. Fitzmordaunt offered up his customary tribute of prayer and praise to Heaven, when the discordant jar of the opening door of the adjoining chamber excited his attention.

Henry immediately applied to the grating, to learn what had occasioned the unusual noise at that hour of the night; and by the feeble gleam of a lamp which one of the gaolers carried in his hand, he perceived a female figure led into the cell, of beautiful form, and in elegant attire.

The keeper retiring, left the light upon the floor; and Henry by its assistance had just traced in her bewitching face a strong likeness of his sister Caroline, when what was his astonishment to

behold the imprisoned youth start up from the ground on which he was sitting, and catch the female in his arms; at the same time exclaiming, “Great Heaven! Matilda, my sister!”

The lady disengaging herself from his embrace, replied, ‘Edmund Herbert! is it possible my brother too should be reduced to this degraded state? Insolent, detested barbarians! Your triumph, however, will be but short. But pray, Edmund, inform me what ill chance has brought *you* to this wretched place.’

“Ah! rather,” returned Edmund, “tell me, my dear Matilda, the strange fatality that has conducted *you* to this spot? How is it that you are in France? that you are alone, and in captivity? Where are our parents? What is the destiny of my beloved mother; and is my adored—— But you are silent—— your colour too forsakes your cheek! In

pity speak, my dearest girl, and at once inform me what horrible calamity has overwhelmed all those I love? Alas! my foreboding heart! your throbbing fears are about to be too fatally verified!"

'Edmund,' resumed Matilda, with some embarrassment, but at the same time affecting a lofty air, 'it is out of my power to answer any other of your questions than those which relate immediately to myself. Of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert I know nothing more than what you must be acquainted with. Some time has now elapsed since I became a voluntary exile from my family; they have doubtless renounced *me*, as *I* renounce——' and she paused a moment — 'my native country.'

A transient rosy suffusion, as she uttered these words, tinged her cheeks, which was suddenly succeeded by a deadly paleness, and she seized her brother's arm to support her trembling frame.

“ Ah, dear Matilda,” cried Edmund, drawing her gently to his bosom, “ what horrible words have escaped your lips? Wherefore this dreadful determination, which equally confounds and distresses me? Oh! recall the fatal speech; and hope, with me, that we shall soon be restored to liberty and Britain.”

“ *Never* will I see it more;” resumed Matilda, recovering her composure, and again assuming a dignified and indifferent air; “ my resolution is as unalterable as the decrees of fate.

“ But though I give up my family, connections, and country, think not that they will fade from my recollection; or that I can ever miss an opportunity of rendering a service to one who has that claim of fraternal affection upon me which you possess.

“ You, I presume, Edmund, are a prisoner of war; and would, probably, as such, in the course of time, regain

your liberty. I say probably, for detested as the English are by the present rulers, it is not impossible, that, instead of an exchange, your confinement might be terminated by a sudden and speedy execution.

‘But whether or not such a fatal catastrophe should take place, at the best you might be doomed to some weeks or months imprisonment in this detestable dungeon.

‘From these evils it is in my power to rescue you, and I will with pleasure exercise it. My own confinement can be but for a few hours ; and no sooner shall they have elapsed, than you also shall be free.

‘Explain, however, to me, by what chance you were thrown into your present situation.’

In reply to this, Edmund in few words informed his sister, that the Lively transport, in which she might recollect

he had sailed from England, being accidentally separated from the fleet, was attacked by a French sloop of war.

“Although,” continued he, “the enemy was considerably our superior in strength, and better appointed in all respects than ourselves, yet we maintained a sharp action for upwards of an hour. Finding at length that she was more than a match for us in distant firing, our captain determined to lay himself alongside of the Frenchman, and endeavour to board.

“In a short time we had grappled him, and myself and a dozen of our crew were upon his quarter-deck.

“It was now, however, that we found the enemy to be much stronger than we expected; as in addition to his complement of men, he had two companies of fusileers on board.

“In a few minutes nine out of our party lay dead upon the deck; and myself

with the rest being secured, were thrust into the hold, till the action was over.

“ This soon took place, as the Frenchman availed himself of a breeze that sprang up, and made off, leaving to the *Lively*, if not the glory of a complete victory, at least the boast of having made the enemy run away. As soon as we came to port, myself and the other prisoners were marched to Paris, and after passing through the slight examination of an insolent commissary, I was conducted to the cell in which you find me.

“ But let me entreat you, Matilda, to satisfy *my* painful curiosity; and not only inform me by what mysterious chances, I see you in France, and a prisoner, but also account for the fatal words which you have uttered, which still vibrate on my ear, and sicken my very soul.”

During the whole of this singular interview the astonishment of Henry may be better imagined than described.

Many years were now elapsed since he had seen the face of his nephew, but the slightest consideration of it brought back a vivid recollection of that noble and expressive countenance, which he had formerly admired in the boyish Edmund.

It was with difficulty he had refrained from discovering himself the moment he found he was so near such dear attachments, and the pain of concealment was still further enhanced by Edmund's simple unadorned tale, which excited in his uncle's mind the highest ideas of his heroism and modesty, and prompted him to pour out all the affectionate praises with which his heart was loaded.

Matilda too was equally the object of his admiration and surprize: as her lovely features and enchanting form reminded him of that only sister and dearest friend, from whose society he had so long been banished; so her appearance in a foreign

country, and within the walls of a prison, her extraordinary deportment, and inexplicable language, struck him with an amazement, to which he could hardly avoid giving immediate expression.

Thinking, however, that any avowal of himself at present might only interrupt that disclosure of Matilda's history, which he hoped Edmund's request would induce her to make, he resolved to combat the pain of concealment a little longer, and wait the termination of her narrative.

He did not remain long in suspence. After a short pause, and some slight emotion, Matilda replied to her brother as follows.

“ Yes, Edmund, I will unfold to you the story of my misfortunes, but first let me impose this solemn condition of my recital, that you make no comment on the steps I have taken, nor attempt to alter the resolutions I have formed. . .

“ Our sentiments respecting my conduct, will, I am persuaded, be as distant from each other as light and darkness. It would only therefore be useless, as well as disagreeable, to contest a point on which it is impossible we should ever agree.

“ An education every way opposite to yours has happily instilled into *my* mind notions of a complexion totally unlike those which *you* entertain; and unshackled by the prejudices which hold others in slavish subjection, I can ridicule and despise the bugbear maxims of doating moralists, and the senseless dreams of superstitious bigots.

“ The refined and enlightened society of the French capital, to which my good stars conducted me at that period of life when principles are formed, and the character is determined, liberated me at once from the errors of the nursery; and taught my aspiring mind to know

its own dignity, to respect its own powers, and to make my will, impelled by the vigour of my imagination, and the warm energies of my affections, the only rule of the conduct I should adopt.

“ With these opinions of perfect independence upon the despots which the world has voluntarily enslaved itself to, under the names of propriety, decorum, and a thousand other equally unmeaning terms, I accompanied Sir Charles and Lady Antoinette to England; regretting the absence which I was compelled to suffer from those benignant friends who had been both my instructors and examples, in that fair and flowery path of freedom to which I was now introduced.

“ But ah, Edmund, my heart acknowledged *one* to whom my debt of gratitude was larger than to others, for the progress I had made in the science of human happiness.

“ Lord William ——— appeared to me to be all that the fondest fancy could pourtray, when sketching out the picture of a perfect being. Godlike in his form, enchanting in his manners, and superior to all around him in talent and accomplishment, his soul filled with lofty sentiment, and his heart beating with the tenderest sensibilities, he seemed to be formed only as an object for the love and admiration of the other sex. Oh, how could insincerity dwell with such perfection ?

“ We became acquainted. I soon acknowledged the power of his excellence, and surrendered up without reserve the affections of my soul to the youth that seemed so well to deserve them.

“ The sentiment was returned, nor did a long time elapse, before we were mutually conscious of a reciprocal passion.

“ At this period, Sir Charles took his family to England, to try the effect of a change of air on Lady Antoinette, whose health was declining ; and to attend some business which demanded his presence. Lord William ——— pressed for a correspondence, to which I consented, as I knew our absence would be long; and the idea of this interchange of sentiments seemed to soothe me under the affliction of a separation from one, whose presence became now essential to my happiness.

“ For the first time in my life I felt the full force of that consolation from epistolary correspondence, which the poet has so beautifully painted:

- “ Heav’n first taught letters for some wretch’s aid,
- “ Some banish’d lover, or some captive maid ;
- “ They live, they speak, they breathe what love in-
spires,
- “ Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires ;
- “ The virgin’s wish, without her fears, impart,
- “ Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart :

“ Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,

“ And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.”

“ We had not been many weeks in England, before the odious Sir Nimrod Heartley took it into his head to form an attachment for me.

“ I encouraged his attentions merely to vary the dull monotony of my life at Herbert-Lodge, and without an idea that the wretch would have the assurance to offer me his hand.

“ At length, however, a formal declaration of marriage came through the medium of my father.

“ I spurned at the unnatural proposal; but Mr. Herbert had resolved that I should accept it; and therefore not only encouraged Sir Nimrod to continue his addresses, but took the most arbitrary measures with me in order that I might be compelled to accept them.

“ But I had a soul which soared above such groveling wretches. Heaven had

made me free, and I was determined to assert my privileges.

“ Though I dissembled my disgust for a time, yet their persecutions at last became intolerable. I wrote to Lord William — therefore, stated the situation to which I was reduced, and begged him immediately to come over to England, and assist me in escaping from tyrants whom I alike detested and despised.

“ In the course of a fortnight, I received a note from him, informing me, he was in a neighbouring village, and would carry me off on the ensuing night.

“ My deliverer came as he had promised ; I flew into his arms, and embarking with him at Southampton, in a vessel which he had prepared for us at that port, soon arrived in the delightful country, where the powers of my reason had been first expanded, and my heart first learned to beat with love.

“ The sanction which the marriage ceremony is considered as affording to the union of the sexes, it was neither practicable, nor in the opinion of Lord William —— and myself necessary to obtain.

“ His father, on whom he is chiefly dependent, would have resented such a *breach of duty*, as the world is pleased to call a matrimonial connexion formed without parental consent, and immediately have disinherited him, had he entered into the state unauthorised by himself; and, for my part, I was fully satisfied that no form of words could add sanctity or force to an union which had been consecrated by solemn vows, breathed from bosoms that panted with the most disinterested passion for each other.

“ Lord William ——, as liberal in his political principles as in his other sentiments, had taken a warm, though con-

cealed interest in the progress of the Revolution, and our hotel was consequently frequented by those partizans of liberty whose enlarged opinions were most consonant to his own. The secret detestors of the bloody system of terror which was now triumphant, held their nocturnal meetings with us; and concerted measures for that subversion of it, which will soon take place. Our public style of living too was splendid, and all the fashion as well as wit of Paris were to be found at the Hotel de Grammont, the place of our residence.

Several weeks passed on in this delightful round of love and gaiety, and each successive day seemed only to increase our mutual attachment.

“ But it was a state of joy too exquisite to last for ever; and fortune when she appeared to be loading me with her choicest favours, was preparing to contrast them by the bitterest trials.

“ One of our most constant and agreeable visitors, was Chambon de Barras, a young Frenchman of fascinating manners, and high endowments; a determined terrorist in principle, but affecting at the same time a detestation of the party of Robespierre, and constantly pouring out wishes for its extinction.

“ As the freest intercourse subsisted between us, Lord William —— and myself were, as I supposed, the depositaries of his counsels; and he pretended to take no step without the assistance of our opinion, and the sanction of our approbation.

“ For some time I regarded him as one of the most estimable of men; nor entertained the least suspicion of his being otherwise than that decided champion of liberty and reason, which he appeared to be. Of course his visits were always welcome to me, and I ever listened with attention and pleasure to

those schemes of political reformation, for the discussion and arrangement of which alone I fancied he frequented our house.

“ Another character amongst our guests, who enjoyed a great share of our esteem, though not so much of our confidence as de Barras, was Philippe Plassey, rather older than Chambon, a middle-aged man, and inferior to him in person and manners, but possessing strong sense and steady revolutionary principles.

“ They frequently met at our parties, but never appeared to feel much cordiality to each other; a circumstance which I attributed either to the dissimilarity of their dispositions, or to envy on the part of Plassey, who could not but perceive that he was less regarded by us than our other friend.

“ I must confess, indeed, he was not so calculated to inspire affection at first.

right as de Barras, though the superiority of his understanding gave him a greater claim to our respect.

“ As the intercourse, however, between de Barras and our family became more intimate, I began to suspect that I perceived an alteration in his behaviour towards me; that he assumed an unusual softness when he addressed me; took every possible opportunity of making a tender, or offering a complimentary, speech; and usually timed his calls when he knew Lord William —— would be from home.

“ The apprehension that he either felt or affected to feel for me a sentiment warmer than the friendship he had hitherto professed, threw me into considerable perplexity, and I was doubting in what manner I should act, when one evening, availing himself of the opportunity afforded him by our being left alone, after a little prefatory compli-

mentary language, he made an open avowal of affection for me, entreated me to quit Lord William ———, and connect myself with one whose heart, fortune, and influence should be devoted to my happiness.

“ Degrading as I felt the proposal to be, I had scarcely patience to hear him to the end, but replied with all the indignation of wounded pride, that if he ever had the assurance to repeat it, I would instantly disclose the insult to Lord William ———, who, I was convinced, would from that moment banish him from his friendship for ever.

“ Far from appearing to be disconcerted at my answer, ‘ Ah, lovely Matilda,’ he replied, ‘ think not that I would attempt basely to supplant my friend in the affections of one on whom his soul reposed for happiness, or rob him of a jewel whose value he could *justly* estimate! No! far be such trea-

chery from me. But when he cruelly *deserts* the woman who depends on him, and leaves such loveliness as yours to be the sport of fortune, shall I be taxed with insolence for humbly offering to her that protection, of which she stands so much in need ?

“ Saying this, he delivered into my hand, a letter from Lord William to this effect :

‘ My dearest girl will pardon the abruptness of my departure, when she knows that an hour’s longer continuance in Paris would rob me of my life. The tyrant is apprized of the meetings at our hotel, and his emissaries are abroad in search of victims. Adieu, therefore, Matilda; and speedily forget one who can never see you more. My return to England must quickly be succeeded by an union with a lady, whom my father has for some time since selected for my wife. Such beauty and accomplishments

as yours, however, will not be long unprotected in the country of gallantry and love ; and until you shall have secured the friendship of another heart as ardent as my own, the inclosed bill will obviate any inconvenience on the score of pecuniary concerns.’

“ Oh ! what were the tortures of my soul, on reading this billet of horror?

“ Ruined, betrayed, deserted, by the man I had trusted with unbounded confidence, and loved with the most intense affection !

“ For a short time my brain seemed as if it were incapable of enduring such a shock ; and had I not been relieved by a convulsive flood of tears, it is probable that reason would have lost her seat, and my mind become a scene of anarchy and ruin.

“ De Barras suffered me to express all the agony of my affliction, without endeavouring to assuage or restrain it ;

when it was a little moderated, however, he again repeated the offer of his love and protection, mingling with his overtures occasional reflections on the treachery and inhumanity of Lord William ——, and protestations of his own enthusiastic attachment and inviolable fidelity.

“ But I was not in a temper of mind to listen with patience either to fresh vows of love, or aspersions against him who had hitherto been the lord of my affections.

“ I answered Chambon, therefore, with scorn and indignation, and insisted upon his quitting my apartment, and never seeing me again.

“ The haughtiness and contempt of my manner called up the anger of De Barras. He assumed a fierce and threatening look, and replied;

‘ Matilda, I can forgive for once an intemperance of language and behaviour which evidently arises from wounded

pride and sharp disappointment. I will therefore leave you at present, and refrain from another visit till I think this paroxysm may have ceased. But remember, haughty girl, if your perverseness continue, and you still refuse to listen to De Barras' vows of eternal attachment, you will have then every thing to *fear* from the resentment of one who is Robespierre's *secret confidential friend*.'

“ Having said this with a stern air, he quitted my apartment, and left me to meditate not only on the afflictive loss I had endured in Lord William ——'s departure, but on the gloomy fears for the future which his mysterious words had just awakened.

“ Decision, however, was necessary for me; and the steps I should adopt were to be taken immediately.

“ I deliberated therefore only for a moment; and having determined to unfold my situation to Philippe Plassey,

and commit myself to his protection, I packed up every valuable article that was portable, and instantly drove to his château.

“ He received me with tenderness and affection ; and by soothing my sorrows, quickly won my confidence, and secured my regard.

“ Yes, Edmund, the generous soul is not a slave to individual attachments ; its love is not a jewel to be worn by *one* alone. The magic charm of sympathetic sentiment will draw it to itself, and form a bond of instant union ; the joys of which the vulgar spirit ne’er can taste or fancy.

“ From Plassey I learned that De Barras was a hypocrite and villain ; the secret spy of Robespierre ; affecting opinions which he did not entertain, in order to acquire the confidence and obtain the secrets of those who were inimical to the tyrant ; that he had betrayed the meetings and discussions which were

held at Lord William ——'s hotel; in consequence of which his Lordship had been obliged to quit France immediately, though without being apprized who had been his accuser to Robespierre; that Plassey found it necessary to confine himself entirely to his château, that he might, if possible, escape the observation and attention of the savage who held the reins of government, and his myrmidons; and that it would be essentially necessary for me to conceal myself with the greatest care, as any suspicion entertained by De Barras of my being under his protection would be inevitable ruin to us both.

“ For a few days I continued to be undisturbed in my new retreat; happy in the friendship and society of this generous man, and enjoying that feast of reason, and that flow of soul, which arise out of the communication of kindred spirits.

“ An unexpected tempest, however, destroyed this halcyon scene.

“ Early this morning Plassey left me, in order to attend a secret meeting of disaffected patriots in Paris, who are taking measures to destroy the present detestable dynasty of terror and tyranny.

“ Shortly after his departure, a noise in the court-yard attracted my attention; and on looking out of the window, the first object that met my eye was De Barras.

“ He saw me before I could draw back, and exclaimed, ‘ Ah! basilisk, have I at length discovered you? You shall not again escape.’

“ He then ordered the guard that attended him to search the house for Plassey, and immediately ascended to my apartment.

“ For a moment my astonishment robbed me of my presence of mind; but before he had entered the room in which I

was sitting, I had once more recovered myself, and was able to oppose his insolence with all my native dignity and pride."

'Will you relent, Matilda,' cried De Barras, 'and quit the arms of a ruined conspirator for the protection of one who throws at your feet youth, power, and riches?'

"No, wretched apostate from all that's good and great," I replied. "The base betrayer of his friend, the mean traitor to those who trusted him, the hypocrite and the villain, can never excite any other emotions in the soul of Matilda, than those of hatred and contempt."

'Die then, perverse fool,' retorted De Barras, and threw at my feet an order for my confinement and execution; 'the *guillotine* shall quickly mar those charms which you deny your lover.'

"And gladly shall I welcome it," I exclaimed, "since it will save me from

the persecutions of one whom I detest, despise, and scorn.

“ Without making any reply, he immediately left the room, locking the door with the utmost violence ; and soon after, I heard him give orders to the soldiers to watch the gates carefully ; and the moment they saw Philippe Plassey approach, to seize, secure, and bring him bound to him.

“ The whole day passed, however, without Plassey’s returning, or my suffering any further interruption from De Barras ; and the shades of night had already descended, when I heard a gentle tapping at the window of my room, which opened near the wall that surrounded the court.

“ I threw up the sash as quietly as I could, and perceived on the top of the wall Plassey’s faithful little black boy Sancho, who, making a sign of silence and

secrecy, delivered a note into my hand, and immediately disappeared.

“ The paper contained these words :
 ‘ Be not alarmed, angelic girl. No evil will betide you. I am safe ; and before another morning dawn, the tyrant will be hurled into the dust ; and all your fears sufferings will cease ! PLASSEY.’

“ A few words will suffice for the remainder of my story.

“ Towards midnight, De Barras gave orders for my immediate conveyance to the *Conciergerie* ; and we shortly after reached that prison, where the singular adventure was in reserve for me of meeting with a captive brother in the cell destined for myself.

“ But your confinement shall not be of long duration ; as I before said, a few hours will again restore me to liberty and love ; and the first act of Plassey’s power shall be to free my brother.

“ Never, by heaven, never shall Edmund accept a boon, for which his sister’s honour is the price.”

‘ Noble, generous youth,’ exclaimed Henry through the grate, unable longer to conceal himself, ‘ heir to all the virtues of my Caroline! No! let us rather perish by the executioner, than purchase a short disgraceful life by sanctioning the dishonour of our family. Oh! Matilda, lost, undone Matilda, hear an uncle’s prayer, that you would once more tread the paths of virtue! Listen to the voice of reason, and the call of truth; and let the banished Henry Fitzmordaunt, the dearest brother of thy mother, hear from your lips the glad sounds of penitence and sorrow for your apostacy, and he will die with pleasure.

‘ Yes,’ continued he, ‘ I have listened, dear deluded girl, with horror and with pity to your story, and claim an uncle’s right to censure and advise you. Ed-

mund's simple tale too has agitated my soul, but with far different emotions; and the only pain which I now feel from my confinement is, that I cannot snatch him to my bosom, and tell him how I love him.'

The astonishment of Matilda and Edmund at this unexpected discovery of their uncle Henry so near them, and under similar circumstances with themselves, was extreme.

A few minutes, however, sufficed for mutual explanation; and the two young people were speedily satisfied, that the person who addressed them was that relation whom Edmund had seen and loved some years before at Herbert-Lodge, and whom Matilda had heard her mother often mention with the tenderest regard.

But *now* was not the season of congratulation.

Edmund's heart had been wrung with mingled sorrow and indignation by his

sister's tale ; and Henry sympathized in these feelings with the most affectionate interest.

Their united intreaties were addressed to Matilda, that she would renounce the connection she had formed ; and by a sacrifice of every thing at the shrine of virtue, regain her peace, restore her character, and once more bring back that tenant of the bosom which she had lost, whose absence nothing can supply, —her self-respect.

They recalled to her recollection the bitter grief of her suffering mother, who was silently sinking under the shock of her daughter's fall from virtue.

They reminded her of those early lessons of piety, with which her mind had been stored, before she left the happy scenes of her infancy and childhood ; and strove to awaken her to a sense of her religious obligations, and to rouse

her to moral duty, by a remembrance of the awful sanctions which enforce it on the Christian's observation.

But their efforts were in vain.

‘ No,’ returned Matilda, in a solemn tone, and with a determined air ; ‘ my mind is not to be influenced by the childish terrors which you have presented to my imagination.

‘ There was a time perhaps when they might have operated on my sickly fancy, and raised a feeling of remorse within my bosom. But the reign of prejudice has long been over there. The silly notions with which a mother's education had begun to cloud my mind have faded away before the light of reason ; and fashion has unfolded to my view the liberal unfettered system of happiness which *she* offers to her votaries. The feelings of my heart, and the dictates of my understanding, are the only standards by which I try actions ; nor do I

blush to say, that whatever the warmth of the one has suggested, has always been confirmed by the sanctions of the other.

‘What! return to England, to meet shame, disgrace, and obloquy? Go back to a deserted home, to encounter reproaches and contempt; to be the foil of my mother’s pampered foundling; to be the topic of conversation at every tea-table in the neighbourhood; and the object for scorn to point the finger at, in all the surrounding villages.

‘No! perish the idea! Rather would I spend all the remainder of my days in the gloom and solitude of this horrid cell, than again set my foot in a country which is so unjust to our ill-treated sex, and so unmerciful to what it terms our *greatest crime*.

‘Insolent system of female oppression, which brands with infamy the wanderings of the heart, and the mistakes

of a too tender sensibility, in unhappy woman; and yet admits, encourages, and applauds, an infinitely more licentious conduct in the other sex.

‘ No! let it be my lot to spend my days in gentler climes, and under the government of milder opinions; in a country where no tyrannical distinctions mark the inferiority of woman; where love has an unbounded range; and pleasure lights up every countenance with smiles, and tunes every heart to softness and sensibility.

‘ Nor let me disguise my natural propensities. I own that I pant after affluence and power; not for their own sakes, indeed; my soul disdains the idea; but as the means of procuring those enjoyments, without which life to me would be a dull insipid round.

‘ My heart, too, doats on the delights of fashion; and the splendour, gaiety, and joy which attend her footsteps, will

be cheaply purchased by the loss of the esteem of what you are pleased to call the virtuous and the good. Nor let my uncle ——’

A tremendous shout from without interrupted Matilda at this moment; the door of the prison was suddenly burst open, and several armed men entered the apartment.

“Joy, Madam,” cried the foremost; “the tyrant is dethroned, and will shortly die. De Barras, your persecutor, has fallen by the dagger. Plassey is busied with the council, but has sent an escort to conduct you to him. We wait your orders.”

‘Ah,’ said Matilda, whilst pleasure flushed her countenance, and sparkled in her large full eye, ‘I thought my hero would perform his promise. Welcome liberty and triumph.’

‘No, Edmund, your sister was not formed for dull domestic virtue. Her

soul disdains the shackles which sour moralists have forged for vulgar minds. Nature, who spreads a wide unbounded field of pleasure before her children, has said to them, *enjoy*; and where is the authority that shall forbid the privilege? Matilda will not own a power that stands between herself and happiness; nor suffer any gloomy phantoms of the imagination to scare away enjoyment from her grasp.

‘ I go, brother, to resume my station in that scene of life for which my warm aspiring mind is formed; but before I part with you and Mr. Fitmordaunt *for ever*, I would willingly be the instrument of restoring you to freedom. A word from Plassey will open to you the door of your prison. A breath from me will influence him to speak it. The times are tempestuous; and the sudden caprice of an unmanageable mob may hurry the inhabitants of these gloomy cells to

immediate execution. Will you be saved from danger, and freed from apprehension? Will you accept from *my* protector that liberty and life which he has given to your sister?

“No!” replied Edmund, with vehemence, and almost choaked by conflicting emotions—

“No! welcome captivity, torture, and death; if, to be rescued from them, I must sacrifice the claims of virtue, or forego the laws of honour! Oh wretched, lost, polluted girl, gladly would I this moment relinquish life and all its hopes, to bring thee back to innocence and peace. But since a fatal blindness has seized upon your mind, and enslaved you to sentiments as false as they are destructive; all I can give you is my sorrow and compassion; whilst I renounce with horror and detestation the acceptance of a favour, that must plunge a sister still deeper in guilt and ruin.”

‘Enjoy, then, the comforts of your system,’ returned Matilda, whilst anger flashed from her eye; ‘the fool that can prefer a name to a reality, a shadow to a substance, deserves all the disappointment and chagrin which his perverse choice must heap upon him. Farewell, for ever.’

Thus saying; she hurried from the chamber, and stepping into a chariot that waited for her at the door, drove rapidly off to the hotel of Plassey.

The conversation which now took place between Henry and his nephew was of the most interesting nature.

The sad apostacy of Matilda furnished no inconsiderable part of it, and whilst they lamented that so much loveliness and talent should have fallen a prey to the libertinism of a fashionable education, Mr. Fitzmordaunt seized the opportunity of confirming the excellent principles which Edmund had avowed to

his sister; and of expressing the happiness he had experienced in finding so much worth and excellence in a relation whom he so greatly loved. He recounted also to Edmund the sad but interesting story of his own misfortunes; and received in return all the particulars of his nephew's tale; the conduct of his father, and the sacrifice Edmund had made of his own independence to save him from ruin; the sorrow of his mother; and the tender preference he entertained for that amiable orphan who had so deeply engaged the attention and affection of Mr. Fitzmordaunt, when he was at Herbert-Lodge.

A mutual sympathy filled the bosoms of these affectionate relatives, and the reciprocal consolations which they offered to each other seemed to invigorate the spirits and restore the confidence of both. The change which had now taken place in the ruling powers of

France appeared also to hold out the prospect of a release from their imprisonment, and they could at length talk of plans to be adopted when they should obtain their liberty.

It had been the secret intention of Mr. Fitzmordaunt, during the whole of his confinement, that, should he escape from it with life, he would immediately endeavour to trace the foundation of those mysterious words of De Bourdon, which he had uttered in the moment when only truth could dictate what he said, and which had rekindled in Henry's bosom the extinguished hope of Adelaide being still alive.

He had resolved on the most diligent and patient enquiry after this treasure of his affections ; and if it failed of success, again to sail to America, without visiting any other European country. Edmund, to whom he communicated his intentions, approved highly of the former

part of the determination. He considered the extraordinary particulars of the narrative as justifying the hope that De Bourdon's daughter might, by some unexpected chance, have been saved from that destruction which seemed indeed inevitable at the time; and he immediately made the offer to his uncle, (in case of their liberation,) of devoting himself as his companion in a search of so much importance to his happiness. But as far as Mr. Fitzmordaunt's plan regarded a return to America, Edmund earnestly objected to its execution. He pointed out to him the probability of Sir Charles having been affected by the sudden revolution which had just then taken place, and in the tumult of the times having either fallen a sacrifice to the rage of the party that was now uppermost, and whom his own violence had irritated against him, or become, like them, the inhabitant of a prison ;

and of the necessity there would be, in either of such cases, for Mr. Fitzmordaunt's presence in England, in order to assert his claim to the vacant title and estate. He dwelt upon the comfort which her brother's presence would afford to the unfortunate Mrs. Herbert, who had now to support herself under the cutting sorrow of a dishonoured daughter; and with all the energy of a mind deeply wounded with a sense of the atrocity of Sir Charles's conduct, he vehemently urged his uncle to an application, for justice and retribution, to the laws of his country; which, he pledged himself, under the circumstances of the case, would sanction all his claims.

The generous ardour of Edmund was irresistible; and his uncle had just acceded to his wish, when both the apartments were unlocked, and a discharge was announced for all the Englishmen confined within them. The affectionate

relations were now permitted nearer intercourse; they flew into each other's arms, and having mingled their tears and gratulations, retired from the hateful scene of their confinement to adopt those plans which they had determined upon in their previous conversation.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. and Mrs. Stanmore, and their fair guest, Madame Henri, were prepared for their departure from Bath, a few days after Mrs. Herbert had been requested by a letter from that gentleman to make the Manor-House the place of her present residence ; but an accident having happened to their coach, in returning one morning from a ride, the ladies were under the necessity of remaining a week longer in their lodgings, in order that it might be repaired before it travelled into Hampshire.

Anxious, however, that Mrs. Herbert might enjoy as soon as possible that comfort and consolation which the sympathy of a kind friend can alone pour into the bosom of affliction, Mrs. Stanmore prevailed upon her husband to proceed immediately to the Manor, and leave Madame Henri and herself to follow as soon as the carriage should be returned from the coach-maker's. He accordingly set out in a post-chaise very early one morning, accompanied by his valet, intending to reach his home, if possible, the same night.

His journey was uninterrupted till within thirty miles of the Manor, when he began to find some difficulty in procuring horses, in consequence of a general election, which had engaged all the public carriages, and thrown the country into confusion for some days past. This circumstance rendered it late in the evening before he arrived at the last

stage of his road, where he was informed, that not a single post-chaise horse was in the stables, nor any expected home for some hours.

“ Very perplexing, indeed,” said Mr. Stanmore; “ but have you nothing, my good friend, that you can put me and my servant upon, to enable us to get a night’s lodging at our own home; for I see you can afford us none here?”

‘ LORD love your heart, sir,’ replied the man, ‘ you know you should be as welcome to any thing I have as my own father. Nobody will refuse any thing to Squire Stanmore; but if I were to give my life for it, I have only our forester Bob in the stable. I’d bet a pint, however, that he’d trot to the Manor with you in an hour. And as for John, why, I’ll put ’em upon the letter-carrier’s horse, who’ll be here in a quarter of an hour, and he may follow your honour as fast as he can. I never was so put

to it in all my life to provide company with cattle. 'Tisn't half an hour ago, that a great man, a baronet, I believe, came in with four horses, which he had driven two stages, because he couldn't get changes at the last. He wanted to go to Herbert-Lodge, and put himself in a cursed passion because I couldn't furnish 'em with horses; but, I told 'em 'twas no use, for I couldn't make 'em. He swore, however, he'd get on, somehow or other; so I sent out and borrowed neighbour Giblest the butcher's horse, for I wouldn't trust Bob with such a turbulent chap. Here, Tom, saddle the poney for his honour Mr. Stanmore; and as soon as Bill, the mail-boy, comes in, gi' his nag a few oats, and let John ha' 'em to follow his master. Coming, coming. I heartily wish your honour a good ride. I believe they'll hurry me to death.'

Mr. Stanmore returned his best thanks to old Rosy-face, for the proof he had conferred on him of his confidence and friendship ; and having snatched a slight refreshment, mounted Bob, and took the road to Stanmore Manor. He soon perceived that his friend had not spoken in too partial terms of his favourite pad, who trotted on with great spirit, and would soon have brought him to the end of his journey ; but the beauty of the night would not allow Mr. Stanmore to pursue it with such rapidity. One wide expanse of glory surrounded him ; and all thoughts of the lateness of the hour were lost in admiration of the wonderful scene :

“ Now glowed the firmament

“ With living sapphires ; Hesperus, that led

“ The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon

“ Rising in clouded majesty, at length,

“ Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,

“ And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.”

“ Ah ! ” whispered Mr. Stanmore to himself, “ how magnificent is this scene ! how apparent are infinite power and wisdom in each of its stupendous features ! Who can look up to this enchanting canopy ; and not exclaim, ‘ the hand that made it is divine ? ’ How deep too is the repose which reigns around ! How sweetly calculated to still each wild emotion, and soothe each rankling care ! Ah ! what a lovely contrast does it afford to the tempestuous state of the moral world, where all is anarchy and din ; where passion and vice obliterate the seeds of peace and order, which God himself has sown ; and transform a paradise into a waste and howling wilderness. Ah, wherefore will not man catch wisdom from his great Creator’s works ; and instead of living only to destroy the general harmony, co-operate with *Him* who gave him being, in striving to promote tranquillity and joy ; and in shed-

ding on all around him friendship, benevolence, and love!"

Whilst amused with these contemplations, the sound of voices gradually increased upon him. They issued from behind a brake, which he approached, and from their angry tone, seemed to be little in unison with the sentiments which occupied his mind.

" 'Tis false as hell!" cried one of the speakers; "you know your orders were that I should dispatch the child at any rate; and hadn't it been for God's goodness, who put some compassion into my heart, I should now have had to answer for the guilt of murder. Didn't you more than once too endeavour to persuade me to assist to assassinate my master, before you fixed upon the plan of carrying off Lady Adelaide in the Forest; and would you not have sunk me deeper in damnation if you could,

by making me his murderer on the night we put him on board the smuggler?"

Mr. Stanmore's servant now rode up, and his master, almost breathless with impatience and amazement, having made a sign to him for silence, drew gradually nearer to the covert, and again listening attentively, perceived that the conversation was carried on by two persons. To the voice of one he was a stranger; but he soon found, to his surprize, that the other speaker was no other than Sir Charles Fitzmordaunt. The baronet seemed to be endeavouring to soothe and compose the person he conversed with; and spoke therefore, in a lower tone, so that Mr. Stanmore could not collect the tenor of what he said; but every syllable which the other uttered, was caught by his ear, and awakened still more his curiosity and wonder.

"No," replied the stranger, to something Sir Charles had said to him, "I

would not carry about with me the wicked secret for another week, if you'd give me the Indies. 'Tis too late now to try any more your damned arts upon me. Had you performed your promise, and supplied me with money, you might have trusted me, and I wouldn't have betrayed you. But, I thank God, you didn't do it; for 'tis to that I owe it, that I have been able to see my wickedness, and (I hope) to repent of it in time. Not getting the promised supply from you, I was carried to gaol by my creditors; and had there leizure for some months to reflect upon my past life and the consequences of it. There I first saw my damnable wickedness, and began to fear the punishment it deserved. There I first determined to make all the amends in my power, as soon as I got out, to those I had injured, by acquainting Mrs. Herbert of the cheat we had put on the world,—that, the title and estates of the

late Sir Gilbert Fitzmordaunt belonged to Mr. Henry, instead of you;—that, you were an impostor, and *my* brother, instead of his; who had been secretly received as her son by the late Lady Fitzmordaunt, in the room of a still-born child;—that, I had been your wicked instrument in all your plots and contrivances; a traitor to my master, poor Mr. Henry, and betrayed him when he carried off his lady; an accomplice in kidnapping and sending him into slavery; and the wicked/exposer of his infant child. I shouldn't indeed have had an opportunity of acquitting my conscience by making such a confession, hadn't my wife's cousin taken compassion on my situation, and released me from my confinement by paying my debts. I was no sooner out of prison, however, than I resolved to unburthen my mind, and make my peace with God without delay, and set out imme-

diately for Mrs. Herbert's house for that purpose. Nor shall any thing you can say prevent me from doing what I intended. You would ruin, I know, if you could, my soul as well as my body ; but I trust in God *that* will find mercy, and as for the other I care but little what becomes of it."

Astonishment riveted Mr. Stanmore to the spot on which he stood ; he trembled with a variety of emotions ; nor had he any power either to speak or discover himself.

In the mean time, Sir Charles seemed to be earnestly endeavouring to mollify the other, and prevail upon him to change his resolution.

' A thousand a year,—half his fortune,—the Northamptonshire estate,—an establishment in France ;' were successively offered without effect.

" No, no ;" was the reply, " my soul's at stake, and nothing shall bribe me to

sink it lower in perdition. By all that's good, I'll tell the whole."

'Then it shall be in hell!' cried Fitzmordaunt in a voice of frantic rage, as he leaped upon his brother.

'Thou shalt not live, damned viper, to blast my fortune, and triumph o'er my fall.'

The noise of a fierce struggle between the parties instantly ensued, mingled and deepened by the cries of the stranger and the blasphemies of Sir Charles, which were succeeded in a few moments by hollow groans:—Mr. Stanmore and his servant now rushed to the spot.

The bright radiance of the moon rendered every object perfectly visible, and they discovered Sir Charles Fitzmordaunt bleeding and panting on the turf; 'whilst his antagonist was rising with difficulty from the ground, grasping in his right hand a bloody knife.

“ Here is murder, John,” said Mr. Stanmore; “ secure the villain, who has committed the atrocious act.”

‘ No, sir,’ said the stranger with quickness, ‘ I am not a murderer!— That I am a false and wicked villain, I will not deny; but blood has never willingly stained my hands.

‘ The wretched man who lies before you, and is my brother, assaulted me with an intent to take away my life. In the struggle that followed, I snatched this clasp-knife from his hand, which he, in endeavouring to recover it, forced accidentally into his own groin.

‘ This is the simple truth of the story. I am ready to go with you, sir, wherever you please; but let me beg of you to give this miserable man some assistance, as I have enough unhappiness on my mind already, and do not wish to have in addition to it the death of my bro-

ther, though it was entirely unintentional.'

Mr. Stanmore, giving orders to John to secure the stranger, turned to Sir Charles.

He breathed, but seemed to be insensible; blood still streamed from his wound, and his eyes were closed.

At this moment the cart of a peasant drove up, who was going with the produce of his farm to an early market in a neighbouring town.

He knew Justice Stanmore immediately, and readily agreed to receive the injured man into his vehicle, and carry him to the Manor-House.

Having therefore staunched the bleeding, and applied a bandage to the wound, Mr. Stanmore directed Sir Charles to be lifted gently into the bed of the cart, and conveyed to his residence, which was not more than two or three miles distant: whilst his antagonist, being

mounted on the horse of the wounded baronet, accompanied the vehicle ; Mr. Stanmore and his servant riding on each side of him, in order to prevent his escape.

The procession moved on in solemn silence ; for the thoughts of each individual were too much occupied to admit of conversation.

A thousand ideas crowded into the mind of Mr. Stanmore, called up by the dark plots of iniquity which the conversation he had just listened to unfolded ; and reflections on the past and anticipations of the future, hopes and fears, doubts and convictions, alternately presented themselves, and kept him in a state of tumultuous agitation, that completely occupied his attention till the party reached the gate of his mansion.

The clock had struck two before their arrival ; and as the family were just then engaged in their quarterly brewing,

several of the servants were already up, so that the wounded man was immediately carried to a chamber, a surgeon sent for, and the prisoner lodged in a secure apartment, without any particular noise, or in the least disturbing the ladies at the Manor, who Mr. Stanmore was anxious should hear nothing of the events which had occurred, till the ensuing morning.

His precautions were effectual. Mrs. Herbert rested quietly till her usual hour of rising, when a gentle tapping at her door awakened her from a pleasing vision, in which she had been carried back to scenes of former happiness, and introduced again to joys that had long been flown.

“ Who is there?” cried Mrs. Herbert.

‘ Ah, dear madam,’ cried Dame Wheatley, opening the door, ‘ I hope you will forgive me for coming in upon you at so unseasonable a time; but I couldn’t

hold out any longer, and was determined to tell you the news myself.

‘ Oh, lack-a-day, to think I should live to see such turns.’

A fit of crying prevented the old woman from proceeding, whilst Mrs. Herbert was lost in wonder and impatience at her language and unexpected appearance.

“ For heaven’s sake, Dame, what is the matter? Why these tears, wild looks, and swollen eyes? How happens it too that you are thus early at the Manor? What new distress have I to apprehend? Do ease my anxious fears by telling me at once the worst.”

‘ Nay, my dear mistress,’ returned Dame Wheatley, wiping her eyes, ‘ don’t alarm yourself; I didn’t mean to frighten you; though to be sure, murder will out, as they say; and wickedness such as that couldn’t always be concealed.’

“ Murder and wickedness!” exclaimed Mrs. Herbert, still more shocked; “ what dreadful secret are you labouring with? Pray be explicit, my good friend, and relieve my mind from the painful suspense which you have excited.”

‘ There don’t ye, don’t ye put yourself in a quandary now, I beseech you.

‘ To be sure, no one would have thought it; but God won’t let iniquity pass unpunished.

‘ ’Tis all the better for Mister Henry, and whether a’ dies or not, *he* must now be the baronet.’

“ Who die?” exclaimed Mrs. Herbert, almost breathless.

‘ Why Sir Charles, to be sure; Sir Charles that was, I mean; the brother of our Jacob. Oh, the Father, what shall I do?’

Another flood of tears now fell from the old woman, to which Mrs. Herbert

gave undisturbed course; convinced that her feelings required such a relief.

In a few moments, however, she again dried her eyes, and being more composed, proceeded.

‘ As I was saying, my dear mistress, this being brewing-day at the Manor, and John being here to assist, I came early this morning to speak to ‘en about one of the cows, that’s a little queerish.

“ Lord, mother, says he, there’s terrible work here. We a’ got a robber and a murdered man in the house; and the justice is coming down to try ‘em both presently. I can shew you one of ‘em, if you’ve a mind to see ‘en.”

‘ I’m mortal afraid of wicked people, I confess, madam; but somehow or other my curiosity prevailed; and so leaning one hand on Jenny, and the other on my stick, I hobbled up stairs into the back wardrobe, where the prisoner was

confined ; John following behind, to prevent 'en from hurting us.

' This, however, was out of his power, poor wretch ; for he had a pair of handcuffs round his wrists, and was lying his face upon the table, covered wi' his hands.

' There was a good deal of victuals by 'en ; but a' had no appetite to taste it.

' A' started up, and turned his head toward the door when we entered ; but, good Lord, what a feel came all over me, when I looked in his face, and saw 'twas no other than Jacob Vincent, the wicked seducer of my poor Betty !

' I screamed out his name, and should have fell upon the ground with fright, had not John supported me.

' He, poor lad, too, was hardly himself, when a' found out who the man was ; and doubling his fist, went up to

'en wi' so fierce a look, that I thought for my life a' meant to have killed 'en.

'He saw a' was bound, however, and therefore woudn't strike 'en; so a' only said, "Jacob, Jacob, is this the end of all thy wickedness? But what better could be expected from the villain who murdered my poor innocent sister?"

'Oh, John,' cried the other, while a' groaned as if his heart would burst, 'I am *not* a murderer. Call me any thing you please, but that: 'tis the only sin that does not lye upon my conscience.'

"What do you call it but murder?" said John. "The poor girl never held up her head after you forsook her. The neighbours scoffed at her, her companions twitted her, and she died broken-hearted, after bringing poor Jenny here into the world."

'What,' cried Jacob, whilst his face coloured like fire, and the tears burst

from his eyes, ‘is this my child? the daughter of my dear Betty Wheatley?’

‘Ah! well may you turn away from your wicked wretched father. He deserves to be forsaken of every one; nor can expect to be acknowledged even by his child.’

“Oh, granny,” said Jenny, weeping, “what can I do?”

‘Go and kiss your father, child,’ said I. ‘He has been a naughty man; but he is still *your* parent.’

“Yes, Mrs. Wheatley, reproach me as you please,” said Jacob; “I more than deserve it all. My heart breaks with sorrow for my crimes. But oh, forgive me! Forgive me too, my brother; forgive me, my only child. God has promised pardon to the penitent and sorrowful; do not then refuse me *yours*.”

“Oh! that my future life make amends for my past sins, and restore me to *his* favour, and *your* love.”

‘ Our hearts were melted, my dear madam, by his words and tears. We all cried together, and ’twas some time before we had power to speak.

‘ But what Jacob then told us, surprised us more than what had already passed.

‘ ‘A told us, ma’am, that Sir Charles, as we a’ called him, is the wickedest of all wicked men; that he is Jacob’s eldest brother, instead of being a baronet.

‘ That Mister Henry has a right to the title and estates.

‘ That Sir Gilbert Fitzmordaunt’s wife had a dead child when her husband was from home, and she, knowing Sir Gilbert was unhappy for want of a son, had agreed to receive as her own an infant of Jacob’s mother, who happened to lye in at the same wi’ herself; that this infant was Charles, who did not know his own history, till Lady Fitzmordaunt told it ’en on her death-bed; that Jacob afterwards found it out from his own

dying mother; but was prevented from telling the secret by some large sums which he received from his brother, and some still larger promises that he made to 'en, but never performed.

‘That prevailed upon by his devilish arts to endeavour to get rid of Henry, he betrayed en, when he had entered into his sarvice in France; that he was one of a party who attacked 'en, when he was travelling wi' his wife in the New Forest; that he trepanned 'en afterwards on board ship, and sent 'en to be a slave in foreign parts abroad; and would you believe it, that he was employed by the baronet (God forgive me, I mean that wicked wretch we have so long called Sir Charles) to kill Mister Henry's infant child; but that having more compassion than his devilish brother, he would'nt shed its blood, and so dropped it in the Forest, just when it pleased God that *I* (aye, madam, I don't wonder at

your trembling so) should come that way to take it under my protection.'

'Lord help me, how little did Jenny and I think that 'twas *her father* from whom we received the little Mary'—

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Herbert, panting with tender sensibility, "and is my dear adopted child the daughter of my beloved Henry?"

'Yes, madam, as sure as you be there; and Jacob told us also, that 'a never should ha' left our Betty, but his wicked mother, who had gi'd away her own child to Lady Fitzmordaunt, persuaded en, because t'other girl, forsooth, had more money nor my poor daughter. Yes, Ma'am, she'd fiftypounds down upon the nail; and twenty——'

"Oh, my dear dame, do pardon me, if I cannot now listen to the particulars of his match. My heart burns to unburthen its joy and gratitude in the bosom of that affectionate girl, whom I

can henceforth consider as claiming from me the love of a relation, as well as the attachment of a friend."

"Why aye, to be sure, dear madam. as you say, she does owe every thing to you, that's sartin.

"I only saved her from starving wi' cold and hunger; but your kindness, wi' God's blessing, has saved her soul, by bringing her up like a christian lady.

"I taught her, indeed, all I could, but then she was too young to learn much; and if she'd bid wi' me, and been as good as I could ha' made her, and I should ha' prayed morning and night that she might; yet poverty, you know, is full of temptations, and she'd ha' come far short of what she now is by following your good lessons and example.

"Who knows, indeed, but she might ha' met wi' another Jacob Vincent, and been ruined, and died wi' a broken heart, like our poor Betty.

‘Alack-a-day; I never think of the dear child even now, but my heart seems ready to burst.’

Fortunately for Mrs. Herbert, (who was agonized with impatience, and yet too tender of the feelings of the good old woman to wound them by an abrupt dismissal of her,) a servant now rapped at the door, and presented a message from Mr. Stanmore, announcing his arrival at the Manor, and requesting the favour of her company in the breakfast-parlour.

She took the opportunity, therefore, of bidding Dame Wheatley adieu, with many expressions of regard and consolation, and a few hints respecting the behaviour it would be necessary for her to adopt towards her lately-discovered son-in-law; whom, from his sorrow and repentance, she had no hesitation in pronouncing to be deserving her pardon and notice.

Mr. Stanmore's countenance glowed with kindness and beneficence as he presented his hand to Mrs. Herbert, when she entered the room.

"Oh, my dear sir," said she, whilst her head sunk upon his shoulder, "how shall I acknowledge the obligations which your goodness has imposed upon me?"

'Name not the subject, I charge you, my dear madam,' returned Mr. Stanmore; 'you have conferred the highest favour upon me, by accepting my protection. 'Tis the best proof you could afford me of your friendship; and who would not be honoured by enjoying the confidence of Mrs. Herbert?'

'But, my dear madam, matters of greater moment demand our attention.

'You have, I presume, learned from Dame Wheatley, most of the adventures of the preceding night; and been apprized that the atrocious villain who has

so long usurped the title and estates of your estimable brother, is now in the house, in a state of considerable danger from a wound which he received in a quarrel with a man whom we have discovered to be his real brother, as well as the tool of his former villainy.

‘I have had an interview with him since his revival from the state of insensibility in which we brought him here; but though he is aware that we are all fully apprized of the imposition and fraud which he has so long carried on; yet he refuses to throw any light on the subject by his own confession, and maintains a sullen silence on that head, which seems to predict a bold disavowal, rather than a penitent declaration of his iniquity.

‘I shall, however, endeavour to prepare against all his artifices, and have no doubt of convicting him, should he recover, of all his villainous practices. I have already taken Jacob’s examina-

tion upon oath, and liberated him from confinement; as the testimony of myself and servant can establish the fact that the wound was inflicted in defending his life against the assault of his companion.

‘It must be your business, my dear madam, immediately to write to your brother in America; apprize him how affairs are circumstanced, and request him to return to England with all expedition, to make that claim which I am confident facts will confirm, and the law support. In the mean time we will take care so to arrange every previous matter, as shall facilitate his success when he takes the business into his own hands.’

The footman at this moment entered the room, and informed Mr. Stanmore that Sir Charles (as he called him) requested the use of pen and paper; as his surgeon, after a second sight of the wound, had pronounced favourably upon it, and allowed him to write and read.

Mr. Stanmore followed the man into his study, to comply with the request, and left Mrs. Herbert to a short interval of silence and solitude, which the confusion of her ideas, and the vivacity of her feelings, rendered almost necessary to the preservation of her reason.

Mary, the daughter of her brother, the child of his adored Adelaide, rescued from destruction, and placed under the protection of that relation who alone could supply the tender attentions of its lost parents!

Henry, suddenly recalled from hopeless exile, to the enjoyment of affluence and honours, the sweet intercourse of fraternal love, and the rapturous feelings of a *father*, when every expectation of such joys had long faded from his bosom!

Mysterious Heaven! What words were adequate to express the wonder and praise of Mrs. Herbert's soul, when

the tide of such merciful vicissitudes passed rapidly before her recollection !

With what gratitude and adoration was her heart borne up to Heaven, as memory traced the succession of events that Providence had planned, to soothe her sorrows, and relieve her difficulties !

“ Yes,” cried she, as she sunk upon Mary’s neck, who now rushed into the apartment, and flew into her arms ; “ yes, beloved offspring of my dearest Henry ; ’tis to *his* goodness, the beneficent Guardian of his creatures, and to that alone, we owe this flood of joy, this burst of sunshine on our clouded fortunes.

“ Praise be to Him, the orphan’s father, and the widow’s friend, for this succour in the time of need !

“ Oh ! may we never cease to love and to adore *that* Power, whose mercy has given a father to my Mary ; and by a discovery which his providence alone

could direct, has ensured protection and support to her, when I shall be no more.

“But come, my child, let us seek some spot of solitude and stillness, where we may, unobserved, pour forth the feelings of our gratitude; and converse undisturbed on that wonderful train of circumstances, which has opened new prospects to our view, and still more firmly united our hearts together, by a new, a closer, and a dearer tie.

“The quiet of a woodland walk will compose our spirits, and give us leisure to regard with more steadiness the extraordinary occurrences of the last few hours.

“Besides, we shall have the pleasure of communicating them to Dr. Fairford, and consulting with him on the steps it may be necessary for me to take on the unlooked-for events.”

Mary, whose heart was bursting with emotion, joyfully assented to a proposal

that would give her an opportunity of expressing her feelings without the observation of those who were not so deeply interested in them as herself; and when they reached the rectory, and were pressed by the Doctor to remain there for the day, she earnestly united in his request, that a servant might be sent to the Manor, to excuse their absence from Mr. Stanmore and his daughter at dinner-time.

The society of Dr. Fairford was every way calculated to allay the ferment of Mrs. Herbert's spirits.

The tempered vivacity of his manner, and the agreeable animation of his conversation, diffused cheerfulness around him; whilst his benevolence inspired affection; his wisdom, confidence; and his piety, respect.

“Have I not often told you, my excellent friend,” said he, as the smile of philanthropy played upon his counte-

nance, “that there was much good in store for you? and predicted, that the clouds would at length disperse, and let in upon your mind scenes of joy and comfort at the last?

“You see I have more than common claims to the character of a prophet; and should be justified in inflicting some exemplary punishment upon you, for the incredulity with which you have listened to my assertions.

“But I spare you at present; and only insist upon it, that when I in future am exercising my skill, and speaking of your *deserts*, and their probable *rewards*, you will not consider me as an authority inferior in *prescience* to the editor of Moore’s celebrated Almanack, or the illustrious Mr. Partridge of prophetic fame.

“Yes, my dear Mrs. Herbert,” continued he, in a more solemn tone, and after a moment’s silence, whilst his eye

beamed with the flame of religious confidence, “ it is not presumption to assert, the great Father of Love will bless his faithful children, even on *this* side the grave.

“ Let the wretched atheist deny the existence of a moral Governor of the universe, and a righteous Observer of the ways of men; let the cold and miserable sceptic lose himself in the darkness of those doubts with which his sophistry has involved the nature and attributes of the merciful Creator; yet, in spite of the vain decisions and false conclusions of these children of error; reason and experience force the conviction upon the mind, that the concerns of humanity are in the hands of One, who not only has power to direct and controul them; but benevolence also, to order their course for the happiness and peace of those who repose their confidence in him.

“Yes! the unperturbed heart, on the slightest survey of the moral history of man, will instantly confess that ‘verily there is a reward for the righteous,’ even here.

“What though the bitterest visitations of this Divine Being appear at times to fall upon the heads of those, who, in the eye of man, have most laboured to deserve his favour; yet still,” said he, brushing away the tear that moistened his cheek, “his goodness administers the balm, whilst his wisdom inflicts the wound; and the dispensation is converted into a *blessing* by the sweet but secret solace that accompanies it, which drops like honey-dew into the soul, and fills it with holy peace, pious comfort, and religious joy.

“Think not, therefore, my dear child,” continued he, turning to Mary, “that the visitations of sorrow are to be considered as indications of the displea-

sure of our heavenly Master towards those who experience them; nor allow your faith and confidence in the mercy and goodness of the Supreme Ruler of all things to be shaken by the occasional appearance of suffering virtue and afflicted worth, which may meet your notice as you travel through life.

“ Believe me, my young friend, they are all beautifully consistent with infinite wisdom and beneficence; since they all have a tendency to produce the happiest moral results.

“ They purify the heart, and enlighten the mind; they correct the passions of the one, and strengthen the energies of the other.

“ They pull down our self-confidence, convince us of our own impotence and impel us to cast ourselves at the footstool of Omnipotence for support and protection. They rectify our false estimates of the value of temporal concerns,

and loosen the bands that chain our affections to a deceitful and unsatisfactory world.

“ They raise our contemplations from this fleeting scene of being, darkened by the clouds of sorrow, and desolated by moral tempests, to visions of future glory, and anticipations of approaching joy ; joy, which ‘ eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.’ ”

Mrs. Herbert was deeply affected, and Mary wept aloud.

“ Yes, amiable woman, and lovely innocence,” continued he, grasping the hand of each, “ happy shall it be for you, that the Disposer of human events hath thought fit to try you by the ordeal of suffering.

“ It will perfect your virtue, fit you for his presence, and lead you to his footstool. Continue to solicit his assistance, and to deserve his protection ; and

believe me, He will never withhold the one, or refuse the other.

“Remember what the long experience of David dictated to him; ‘I have been young,’ says he, ‘and now am old, yet never saw I the righteous forsaken.’ And if the sanction of *my* observation might have any weight after that of the Psalmist, I could most conscientiously adduce it, to confirm the great truth his assertion was intended to convey; that the merciful goodness of God will ever support those who trust in Him.

“Oh!” cried he casting up his eyes to heaven; “Oh, sainted spirit of her in whom were centered all my hopes of worldly happiness, thou knowest the bitter sorrows of my soul, when thou wast called from hence to inhabit thy kindred skies!

“Thou canst tell what was the desolation of my heart, when it lost the tender partner of all its joys! Thou too

canst tell the source from whence distilled that healing on its wounds, which soothed their throbbings, and restored its peace. *Religion*,—the consolations of my faith; the insight which it afforded into the *present* system of God's moral government of all below, and the views that it unfolded of his future dispensations; of the mighty recompense of reward, which awaits *them* in *another* world, who bear with Christian resignation their appointed lot of suffering in *this*."

His voice here faltered, and a tear stole down the furrowed cheek of the venerable rector; but it was the offspring of affectionate remembrance, mingled with the joyful anticipation of a speedy reunion with her for whom it fell; and rather inspired confidence in the sufficiency of the consolation he had described, than doubts of its efficacy or power.

A moment of affecting silence now ensued; in which each of the party seemed to retire into their own hearts, and revert to those subjects of distress which were peculiarly their own.

It was however a pleasing retrospection, tranquillized by piety, and enlightened by hope; that enabled them soon to recover their composure, and to descend to the discussion of future arrangements.

“ Well,” said the Doctor, “ measures must be immediately taken, my dear madam, respecting the confession of Jacob.

“ I have no doubt of its truth, and little apprehension that it will lead to the detection of every scheme of iniquity in which that paragon of wickedness who had so long usurped your brother’s title and estates, has been engaged.

“ Much caution and prudence, however, will be requisite in our proceedings,

as his cunning and address are fully equal to his depravity.

“ But you will have an admirable adviser in Mr. Stanmore, as far as legal knowledge may be serviceable ; and if you will accept of the assistance which the experience of *fourscore years* can afford, you know you need not look further than the Rectory for it.

“ It seems extremely probable, from the accounts which have at length reached this country, that Edmund must be now a prisoner in France.

“ In this case, I apprehend it will not be impossible to convey information to him of the circumstances which have lately transpired.

“ Perhaps, also, his exchange or ransom may be effected ; and in that case you may shortly have the happiness of relating to him yourself the events which have taken place ; a conference,” added he with an arch look, “ at which Mary,

I am inclined to think, would have no objection to be present."

The hint, whilst it suffused the cheek of the amiable girl with a rosy blush, struck in unison with a secret hope which lay concealed in Mrs. Herbert's mind.

She had long in silence indulged the idea, that Edmund and her adopted daughter were not insensible of each other's excellences; and that a tender sentiment, the virtuous offspring of a mutual admiration, had bound their hearts together by an inseparable tie.

The knowledge of Mary's stronger claims upon her love, by the dear relationship in which she now stood to her family, had increased the wish, that she should become her real as well as her adopted child; and the fair opportunity afforded by the worthy rector's observation, and Mary's delicate embarrassment on the occasion, tempted Mrs. Herbert to pursue the subject, as she

returned with her in the evening to Stanmore Manor.

The openness of Mary's character soon convinced her that her surmises had not been unfounded.

The ingenuous girl knew no disguise; the sentiment that her heart acknowledged was pure and generous; and, though her delicacy would have revolted from intruding a confession of it on her protectress; yet the thought of denying or concealing it was equally foreign to those principles of candour and honour, in which she had been instructed, and by whose dictates she regulated all her conduct.

She therefore made a full disclosure of the tender scene that had passed between Edmund and herself, and explained the circumstances which had prevented Mrs. Herbert from being informed of it before.

If the *hope* of such an attachment subsisting between the darling objects of her affection had been a source of pleasing contemplation to Mrs. Herbert's mind, the *certainly* of its existence was attended with the most delightful emotions of joy; and though she could only whisper a blessing on her absent son, as she pressed Mary to her bosom; yet the tears that fell fast from her eye convinced the lovely girl, her sentiments towards Edmund had received the fullest sanction of one, whose concurrence satisfied her at once of the propriety and rectitude of the sentiments she entertained.

CHAPTER V.

WHILST Stanmore Manor was the scene of these interesting discoveries and events, Mr. Fitzmordaunt and his nephew Edmund were bending their course from the continent to Herbert-Lodge.

In pursuance of the plan on which they had determined to act, before their liberation, no sooner did this agreeable circumstance take place, than they commenced their search after the daughter of De Bourdon.

The voice of Adelaide still echoed in the ear of Henry ; and the words of her dying father, “ confined, separated, alive in France,” were never for a moment absent from his mind.

Eternally busied on a subject the most delightful of any to his soul, his attention during the day scarcely gave a moment’s consideration to any other object than the possibility of discovering his long-lost treasure ; whilst fancy, equally interested in realizing the charming hope, perpetually indulged him in his dreams with the ecstasy of its accomplishment.

No measure, therefore, which ardour and affection could dictate, which expectation could suggest, or probability encourage, did Henry and his nephew omit to adopt.

But all were adopted without success, and the result of every additional enquiry only convinced them, they were

still further from obtaining any satisfactory intelligence respecting the object of their search.

Still, however, the perseverance of Mr. Fitzmordaunt was not to be shaken; each succeeding day found him more eager in the chace than the former one.

“No,” said he to his nephew one morning, who would have deterred him from pursuing an enquiry which appeared to be hopeless, and had persuaded him to return to England; “No, my dear Edmund, seek not to change my purpose. Never will I quit a country, where I have reason to believe, that my beloved wife, from whom I have been torn, and whose loss I have so long deplored, still lives; and lives an unprotected wanderer.

“Fortune, health, and safety, are trifles, when balanced against the slightest hope of meeting her again.

“That hope, feeble as it may be, still fondly lingers in my bosom; nor will I

leave France, till it be extinguished in despair.

“ But, far be it from me, my dear nephew, to detain you longer from your higher duties; or to be the selfish barrier between you and the happiness which is so justly your due.

“ Go, Edmund, cheer that parent who now deplores the absence of her son; and receive the tender welcome, with which the sensibility of my Mary will greet the arrival of one, to whom she has surrendered her affections.”

‘ Alas, Mr. Fitzmordaunt,’ replied Edmund, ‘ how shall I acquire courage to annihilate in your bosom that lingering hope which still flatters you with the prospect of once more possessing your lost Adelaide?’

‘ But the cruel certainty must not be concealed.

‘ Here, my dear sir, is a paper, which it will require all your fortitude to peruse,

since it contains a confirmation of whatever your worst fears might have anticipated.

‘It is the cursed list, published by authority, of those victims to lawless violence, who fell on the bloody day on which De Bourdon died; and names his daughter as the companion of his fate.’

Henry, with trembling hand, took the infernal scroll.

It had been printed at the time of the Marquis’s execution; and specified by name both him and the lady Adelaide.

Having perused the paper, he for a few minutes continued silent; whilst his bosom swelled with a struggling sigh, and a tear stole down his cheek.

At length recovering himself, and returning the list to his nephew, “Heaven,” said he, “thy will be done! It is not for me to murmur at thy decrees, to arraign thy wisdom, or to question thy

beneficence! Be it my *care*, as it is my *duty*, to obey, rather than repine.

“Yes, Edmund, I will now attend you.

“The last gleam of that hope, which again gave Adelaide to my arms, is vanished. But,” added he with fervour, “we *shall* meet again, and meet for an eternal union.”

Little time now elapsed in their preparing to quit Paris, and return to England. Having procured passports, they proceeded to Havre, and taking their passage on board a neutral ship, arrived at Portsmouth on the afternoon of that day, in which Mrs. Herbert had been apprized of the scene of villainy carried on by the fictitious baronet, and of the near relationship in which she stood to her adopted Mary.

Anxious to reach the place of their destination, instead of remaining at the sea-port where they landed, the travel-

lers determined to proceed the same evening, upon their journey to Herbert-Lodge; and to sleep at the inn, a stage short of it, that they might not disturb the family at a late and inconvenient hour.

Rising with the sun on the ensuing morning, they were soon on the road to that spot, which now contained all that was dear to the bosoms of them both.

A variety of mingled feelings, hopes, fears, and anticipations, occupied their attention, wrapt them in meditation, and prevented all conversation.

Every circumstance of the scene around them encouraged to silence and reflection.

Not a breeze shook the bursting buds of the tall trees that formed the magnificent natural avenue, through which they passed.

The sun, struggling with the vapours of the night, was gradually asserting his

dominion over them, and throwing an interrupted radiance upon the humbler plants, which reflected his light from the large drops of dew that trembled on their branches.

The song of love echoed through the deep woods on every side, whilst the warblers that sent it forth, busily employed in the gentle offices of conjugal and parental affection, though they broke the deep solemn repose of the scene by their harmony, yet excited a tender melancholy in the mind, which more than recompensed the interruption.

“ Ah! happy tenants of these peaceful shades,” exclaimed Henry, breaking the silence he had hitherto observed, “ how grateful is your melody to my bosom ! What sweet recollections does it awaken. What pictures does it recal of that imaginary bliss which floated on my fancy, as I led my Adelaide through these deep recesses; and which I hoped

to have enjoyed in your sequestered retreats.

“ Oh, Edmund, had you known my love, the tears with which I embalm her memory would require no excuse in your opinion.”

Edmund's heart was full; since their meeting in France he had ever sympathized in the sorrows of his uncle, but he now participated with more than common feeling in those peculiar emotions, which the spot in which they were had produced in Henry's mind.

He had brought the interest also nearer home, and applied the circumstances of his companion's fate to himself and that adored girl to whom his heart had long been surrendered.

The carriage too approached the Lodge, and was now winding up a hill from the summit of which they would command a view of the residence of his Mary.

The fears inseparable from sincere affection had grown upon him as the distance between them lessened; and a thousand alarms of the changes absence might have produced, increased the agitation of his bosom.

He found himself incapable of replying to his uncle's observations, and only answered them with the sigh of sympathetic sensibility.

In a few minutes the post-chaise had reached the top of the hill, and Herbert-Lodge, and its majestic woods, lay spread before their eye.

They were prevented, however, from indulging a long gaze at a spot which was so dear to them, by a nearer object that seemed to demand all their attention.

It was a coach that had been overturned on the declivity they were now preparing to descend.

Two post-boys and a footman were endeavouring to put it to rights, having

taken the horses out, which were grazing by the side of the road.

As they approached the broken carriage, “ I hope,” cried Henry to the servant, “ no one has been hurt by the accident.”

‘ No, your honour,’ replied the man, ‘ mistress and the lady luckily got out before the axle quite gave way.

‘ I told ’em, before they left Bath, the coach wouldn’t hold out the journey; but Mrs. Stanmore was so anxious to get home, that she would set out before it was thoroughly mended from another mischance it had met with—’

“ And where is Mrs. Stanmore, my friend?” said Edmund, interrupting him.

“ Perhaps we may be of some service to her. She and her friend may at least make use of our carriage to the Manor.”

‘ Why, as to the matter of that, sir, mistress will be very glad to see young Mr. Herbert, (for the footman now re-

collected Edmund,) because she's *nation* frightened, I believe ; but I don't suppose she'll ride again, as we're only a mile and half from the Manor-House.

‘ You'll find her and the lady, however, in the path behind that tump of trees.’

Henry and his companion now quitted the post-chaise, and having desired their driver to assist in the reparation of the coach, they struck into the little thicket before them.

It opened upon a narrow green-sward walk, skirted with holly bushes on each side, and running parallel with the turnpike-road, though concealed from it by the thick skreen formed by these beautiful evergreens.

The ladies they were in search of, were walking slowly on, and had proceeded not more than an hundred yards over its green and velvet turf.

“ There is Mrs. Stanmore,” said Edmund, “ but who her companion in mourning is, I am at a loss to guess. She seems, however, to be a very fine woman. I think I never saw a more elegant figure, or a more graceful walk.”

‘ Truly interesting, indeed,’ returned Mr. Fitzmordaunt, as he quickened his pace to join the ladies, and raised his voice that they might have notice of the approach of himself and fellow-traveller, and not be taken by surprize.

In an instant the unknown lady turned her head towards him ;—a long black veil hung from her bonnet, and entirely concealed her face.

She gazed for a moment with earnestness on the gentlemen who were approaching her, and then uttering a faint shriek, threw her arms round the neck of Mrs. Stanmore, and hid her face in her bosom.

Henry sprang forwards with the rapidity of lightning, to prevent her falling, and caught her in his arms.

The veil at this moment was wafted from her face, and in the lovely features which were now disclosed to him, he beheld the angelic countenance—of his adored and long-lost wife !

“ My love, my Henry, my husband ;” exclaimed she, as she opened her expressive eyes, and gazed upon him with intense affection ; “ is this happiness real, or am I the sport of a visionary dream ?”

‘ No, beloved Adelaide !’ replied he, ‘ no ! best treasure of my soul, it is your fond, your faithful Henry, who now presses you to his heart. To that heart, which, though dark and desolate ever since it lost its Adelaide, has never ceased to dwell with the tenderest affection on the memory of its beloved.

‘Oh, heaven, teach me to be thankful for this best gift thy bounty could afford, the restoration of my wife!’

For a few moments the emotions natural to such a situation prevented all connected conversation.

Nature demanded her tribute; and tears of joy supplied the place of language.

It was a scene to affect even those who were least interested in the happiness of the parties concerned; but in Mrs. Stanmore, who now witnessed the termination of all Madame Henri’s sorrows; and in Edmund, who saw his valued uncle thus unexpectedly blessed by the recovery of that treasure, the pursuit of which he had relinquished in despair; the discovery and its effects occasioned a degree of tumultuous agitation, only inferior to what Henry and Adelaide experienced.

When the first overflowings of emotion had subsided, and the ladies had expressed their wish to walk the remainder of their way, rather than finish it in the post-chaises; “but how, my best beloved,” cried Henry, “is it possible, that you should be thus alive, safe, and in England?”

“How could you escape the dreadful fate, to which I thought you had been doomed, when you were first torn from my protection? and by what means have you been since saved from that engine of death, which deprived your father of his life, and by which you were said yourself to have perished?”

“All is to me inexplicable mystery.”

‘It is to the goodness of that Providence, my dearest husband, (replied Adelaide,) without whose decree not a sparrow falls to the ground, that I have been saved from every peril, and again restored to happiness and Henry.’

‘ My story is a long one; full of mercies from *Him*, who is the friend of the distressed, and binding *me* to eternal gratitude and praise.

‘ In time, you shall know it all. It may be sufficient to satisfy present curiosity to acquaint you merely with the heads of it.

‘ You cannot have forgotten, my dearest friend, the fatal evening that separated us from each other.

‘ This forest was the scene of the event; and, ah! how did my bosom throb with tender recollections, when I last night entered its well-remembered shades!

‘ I was carried uninjured from the chaise in which we were attacked, notwithstanding the false account of my death inserted in the public papers by Sir Charles, (for the pistol-ball, that they afterwards told me *had killed you*, passed harmless by me,) and removed by nightly

journeys to Fitzmordaunt-castle, in Northamptonshire.

‘ I do not detail to you the reproaches of my father and Sir Charles, who frequently saw me at this mansion; nor the deep affliction into which I was plunged by the news of your death.

‘ Here I was concealed for some months with the most scrupulous caution, and oh! (forgive this tear) here the tender pledge of our affection first saw the light; that smiling female infant of which the barbarians after a few days deprived me, under the pretence of putting her out to nurse.

‘ Yes! Henry, they robbed me of my child, and soon informed me she was dead; having either given our offspring a prey to chance, or filled up the measure of their villainies by spilling the blood of the lovely innocent.

‘ As soon as I could be removed with safety, the baronet and my father took

me with them to France, and placed me in a convent, near the château of De Bourdon, with the most rigid injunctions to the abbess of strict confinement.

‘It was an inexpressible relief to my spirits to find that the good father Albert had become the confessor of this society. He sympathized with my sorrows, soothed my mind, and strengthened my resignation.

‘Years rolled on without any event occurring to alter my situation.

‘The revolution at length burst out in all its fury. The doors of every religious house, and of our convent amongst the rest, were thrown open; and the wretched prisoners again restored to freedom and society.

‘Father Albert would not desert me. “We will go,” said he, “to Paris, to get a small supply of money which is owed me there, and quit this land of horror for your native country.

“With the generous English we shall find protection and support. Perchance too, some connection of your husband may be discovered, who will receive and befriend you, when I shall be no more.”

‘We had soon reached the French metropolis, and were walking through one of its streets to the house of Father Albert’s acquaintance, when a mob encountered us, leading to the guillotine a venerable old man, whom, on his nearer approach, I saw distinctly to be my father.

‘Heavens! what were my sensations on this discovery!

‘I forgot all the injuries I had received; and nature only worked in my heart. I rushed into the thickest of the crowd; and strove, but in vain, to reach my parent. My last effort of strength was exhausted in a piercing but useless cry, to proclaim his innocence, and ask for pity.’

“ Ah ! merciful Heaven ! ” exclaimed Henry, “ that was the cry that vibrated on my ear, and bade me once more hope to see my Adelaide ! ”

‘ A fainting fit saved me from contemplating more of the horrid scene.

‘ When I recovered, I found myself in the arms of father Albert, who informed me, he had with the utmost difficulty saved me from the guillotine to which De Bourdon had been led ; and had he not found means to persuade those around me, that, in spite of my declaration, I was *not* the daughter of the Marquis, but a child of his own, whose reason was affected, the same instrument would immediately have deprived myself as well as my father of existence. He added, that the crowd had credited his assertions ; but, insatiate for blood, had instantly seized on another hapless female, and executed her as the daughter of De Bourdon !

‘As soon as possible we quitted a city stained with the slaughter of innocent thousands, and sailed from France.

‘Landing at Southampton, we proceeded to Bath; where I have experienced the delightful pleasure of repaying some part of the debt of gratitude which the good father Albert had imposed upon me, by rendering the concluding scene of his life comfortable, and soothing the pains of his last sickness; and where the additional happiness has awaited me of gaining the friendship of this dear and excellent woman.’

The confused emotions that agitated Henry during this short recital, might easily be perceived, by the quick changes which marked his expressive countenance; and Mrs. Stanmore, in order to wave a subject which was evidently too painfully interesting to the parties more particularly concerned, took occasion, from the conclusion of Adelaide’s speech,

to explain to Mr. Fitzmordaunt and his nephew the manner in which she had become known to her; the circumstances of the Abbé's death; the reason of their being in the road by themselves, and the cause which had induced Mr. Stanmore to set out for the Manor, before the ladies were able to quit Bath.

The unhappy termination of Mr. Herbert's career, and the distressed situation in which he had left his family, made a necessary part of her recital; but she touched the events with so much delicacy and good-sense, as almost healed the wounds which the intelligence inflicted on Edmund's feelings.

Of the more recent occurrences at the Manor-House, she was herself still unapprized, and therefore could give no information respecting them to her auditors.

The discovery had taken place only two days before; and she had passed on

the road *that* letter in which Mr. Stanmore had communicated the particulars of it to her.

They had now reached the avenue which led to the Manor-House, where the party, just assembled round the breakfast-table, were expecting a neighbouring justice, whom Mr. Stanmore had requested to be present at the second examination of Jacob, and at the interview which he intended that morning to have with the fictitious baronet.

On the preceding day he had been indulged at his own desire with pen, ink, and paper; and from some hints which he dropped on receiving them, Mr. Stanmore was led to hope he might determine on a voluntary confession.

As the matter, however, was of much moment and delicacy, he had prudently engaged his friend in the commission to call at the Manor, in order to sanction every step he might see it necessary to

adopt, as well as to take advantage of every occurrence that should arise favourable to the full developement of the truth.

“No, my dear friend,” said he, addressing himself to Mrs. Herbert, “I cannot for a moment doubt the eventual triumph of virtue; nor believe that the exemplary resignation with which you have endured your heavy and peculiar trials, will in any wise lose their reward.”

Mrs. Herbert sighed, and gently shook her head.

“Nay, do not check my hopes,” continued he, “by those expressions of incredulity. Surely the grounds of them are sufficiently solid to clear me from the charge of being too sanguine.

“The miserable wretch above us will, I have no doubt, make a full confession of his villainy.

“A few months will restore Henry to your embraces, and the enjoyment of

that property which has been so long unjustly withheld from him ; and Mary," added he, smiling, " will join her prayers to mine, that Edmund——"

' Oh, heavens!' cried the blushing girl, as she turned her face towards the window to conceal her confusion, ' Edmund is even now approaching the house !

' Yes, my dear mother, it is indeed your gallant son !'

" Impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. Herbert, rising hastily from her place, and darting to the window—and after a moment's pause, " Oh! 'tis no delusion," added she; " gracious Providence! teach me to deserve the blessing; 'tis my child, accompanied by my dear, my banished brother!"

' *My father*, did you say?' resumed Mary, ' oh, let me fly to beg his blessing, and offer all that duty and affection can inspire.'

The party had now ascended the steps that led into the breakfast-parlour.

In a moment Mary unlocked the glass door which opened upon them, and rushing into Mr. Fitzmordaunt's arms, 'Oh!' exclaimed she, 'receive and bless your child! acknowledge and love your Mary! whom Heaven preserved from an untimely grave, that she might live to soothe the sorrows of her parent.'

"Yes, Henry," said Mrs. Herbert, as she caught Edmund to her bosom; "Mary, to whose discovery and protection Providence directed your sister, is the offspring of your adored, unfortunate, and long-lost Adelaide."

'No longer *lost*,' replied he with vehemence, stretching out one hand to Adelaide, whilst his other encircled the neck of his daughter.

'Behold my beloved wife! See, Heaven has filled up the measure of its

goodness, by restoring the *parent* with the *child*.

‘*Here* is the partner of my soul, for whom I have grieved in widowed solitude so many years. Crave her blessing, my darling daughter, and deserve her love.’

Wonder, joy, and rapture filled every heart.

Mary flew forwards to the embraces of her mother.

Their faces were hidden in the bosoms of each other.

Fast-flowing tears of ecstasy expressed the powerful workings of nature in the souls of both ; whilst the scene of tender passion was heightened by the broken accents of affection, and interrupted ejaculations of gratitude and praise.

Some time elapsed before the party was sufficiently recovered from the natural agitation which such extraordinary and affecting events were calculated to excite,

to enable them to reduce their thoughts or language to any regularity or coherence; but as Mr. Wilmot was arrived, (the gentleman expected by Mr. Stanmore,) the presence of a stranger restrained the expression of feelings whose violence might have exhausted the strength and spirits of the females, and gave rise to a conversation which briefly explained to Henry and his companions the circumstances that had occurred, and the plan Mr. Stanmore meant to adopt for the compleat investigation of the extraordinary affair.

They had not, however, time for long discussions.

A deep and lengthened groan was heard from the room above them; succeeded by the noise of broken murmurs and convulsive struggles.

“It is,” said Mr. Stanmore, “the miserable culprit, in the apartment over our heads.

“He is even now reaping the rewards of his villainy; and suffering the throbs of conscience, and the terrors of remorse.

“Allow me to step up to him at this favourable moment; perhaps I may persuade him to a full disclosure of the wickedness which thus harrows up his soul.”

Not many moments elapsed before Mr. Stanmore again returned into the breakfast-parlour; but his countenance was pale, his look hurried, and his hand, which presented a paper to Henry, trembled as he delivered it.

“Alas!” said he, “it was the struggle of death, and the groan of a departing spirit, that we heard.

“Despair has cut off the possibility of repentance; and prompted the unhappy wretch to release himself from the shame of public detection and temporal punishment, by self-murder.

“He yet grasps the instrument of destruction in his hand; but his guilty soul is flown to that tribunal which suicide cannot escape, and where the impious act will only aggravate his crimes, and enhance his punishment.

“This paper lay upon the table, directed to me. Perhaps, Sir Henry, you will have the goodness to read its contents to us; an office I am too much agitated to perform.”

The Baronet bowed assent, took the paper, and read as follows:

‘TO MR. STANMORE.

—— ‘My mind is determined! my resolution is fixed! I will boldly rush into the dark abyss of nothing; and extinguish a being which I can no longer enjoy.

‘Think not that I would stoop to purchase the worthless possession of a few

more feverish days, at that expence which a longer continuance on this disgusting scene must entail upon me.

‘No! Perish the thought, that I should live to swell the joy of my enemies; to be the derision of those I despise, the scorn of those I hate.

‘But ere I sink into eternal oblivion, let me not lose the last gratification that my heart can experience; the recollection of the triumphs I have won over the fools of virtue; and whilst I contemplate the destruction of my own fortunes, and the termination of my being, I will hug the solacing idea, that my career has been brilliant whilst it lasted, and adorned with the ruin of those, the thought of whose surviving, and benefiting by my downfall, would alone render my departure from existence intolerable.

‘Yes, Sir, thanks be to fortune, which in this instance, at least, has crowned my

schemes with the compleatest success, Henry and Adelaide are no more !

‘The hated objects which for years had secretly blasted my enjoyment, and escaped my vengeance, are at length removed, and become incapable of enjoying my overthrow, or raising themselves upon my ruins.

‘De Bourdon’s daughter followed her father to the guillotine ; and Henry fell under *my* dagger, when he was endeavouring to rescue from death the parent of his wife.

‘The triumph, therefore, of those whose cause you have advocated, must be imperfect ; and my soul swells with rapture, when I recollect that the joy of success shall be extinguished by the tears of regret for those who are lost.

‘But, sir, let me not leave you to the flattering consolation of hope, that my information may be groundless.

‘ No; a slight recital of my fortunes shall convince both you and the females you have patronized, that narrow is the circle of those who can now reap any advantage from the discoveries that have been made.

‘ You will have heard from that hell-hound Jacob, the author of my ruin, much of the history of my life.

‘ He will have told you, that, though apprized of my real birth, by the dying Lady Fitzmordaunt, (who fell a victim to absurd remorse for the *imposition* she had practised on her husband,) I carefully concealed the circumstance from every human being; and would have let the secret perish with me, had it not been disclosed by my own mother (curse the infatuation that impelled her to the folly) on her death-bed to my brother Jacob.

‘ From him you will have learnt too, that I purchased his concealment of the

story by large pecuniary bribes; but that notwithstanding the amount of these contributions upon my fears, his extravagance reduced him to occasional situations of distress; by one of which he was obliged to enter into the service of Henry, in France, whither Jacob had followed me, in hopes of extracting from me an additional sum to supply some immediate necessities.

‘ You will further have been apprized that being possessed of his master’s secrets, he found me out, and discovered them all to De Bourdon and myself; thinking that on this account he should be entitled to draw more largely on my purse.

‘ The separation of Henry and his wife; the transportation of the former to America; the concealment of the latter; and the fate of her infant, which the infernal hypocrite, my brother, had only exposed, instead of destroying, and

whom I afterwards saw with horror at Herbert-Lodge, and learnt was the adopted child of Caroline, are of course in your possession.

‘ My next step was to marry the natural daughter of De Bourdon, (whom he released from a nunnery for that purpose,) the Lady Antoinette, now publicly adopted by the Marquis, and declared to be the heiress of his estates.

‘ Basilisk, that thou wast ! how did the secret pangs of wounded pride and jealousy excruciate my soul, when I discovered that Herbert was the favoured object of her love; Herbert, my companion and my friend, to whom I had sacrificed the lovely Caroline, and freely assisted with my fortune to save him from disgrace. Curses light upon the memory of both ! Ah ! well did ye revenge the wrongs of Henry and Adelaide.

‘ Attention to my own interests with my father-in-law the Marquis obliged.

me to an almost constant residence in France, from whence I made only short and occasional visits to England. But when the Revolution broke out, and the different parties began to take their stations, I soon perceived, that the one to which De Bourdon had attached himself, would enjoy only a temporary existence, and that to secure his *property*, which was become an important object to me, I must sacrifice its *owner*.

‘ Without delay, I became his accuser, though a secret one.

‘ He was quickly apprehended, and condemned; and I had soon the satisfaction of following the tumultuous procession, that led him to the guillotine.

‘ But what was my surprize, to hear amidst the crowd the daughter of De Bourdon proclaiming the innocence of her father; and to see Henry Fitzmordaunt, her husband, (who I supposed had long since perished in an insurrec-

tion of the negroes in South-America,) exerting himself to prevent the execution of the Marquis!

‘ My good genius did not desert me, however, at a moment upon which so much depended that was important to myself. I stabbed Fitzmordaunt with my dagger; I saw him fall, never to rise again, for its point had reached his heart. In another moment I raised the hue and cry, that the daughter of De Bourdon, the partner of his conspiracies, was in the crowd.

‘ The populace instantly took the alarm, and began to search for another victim.

‘ They quickly found her; and, as I afterwards learned from the daily list of executed traitors, revenged upon her all the disappointments she had heaped on me.

‘ My fears on this account were silenced; but other dangers awaited me.

I too had found a secret enemy, and been accused at the tribunal of traitorous designs.

‘ An intimation of the impending destruction accidentally reached me.

‘ I instantly quitted the metropolis, and though diligent search was made after me, yet by taking a circuitous route, and lying concealed for some little time, I at length effected my escape to England.

‘ You know the remainder of my story.

‘ That damned, detested villain, who had dipped for years so deeply in my purse, made, some time since, a larger pecuniary demand upon me than ever he had done before, for the payment of a debt incurred by his extravagance.

‘ Startled at the magnitude of his exactions, I promised him assistance, but in the mean time privately prevailed upon his creditor to arrest him; hoping, from the largeness of the sum, he would

be confined for life to the walls of a prison, and give me no further trouble.

‘ His wife’s relations, however, liberated him; and the fool, irritated by my neglect of his demand, or panic-struck with scruples which none but ideots can experience, determined to betray me.

‘ You know how effectually he has executed his malignant purpose.

‘ Yes, sir, he has pulled down the fabric of my fortunes, but he shall not condemn me to the mortification of seeing them enjoyed by others. I shall quit this hated light with one solacing conviction on my mind, that Henry and Adelaide, the detested rival of my first attachment, and the proud rejecter of my proffered affections, can neither know my defeat, nor rejoice in my overthrow.——

‘ But, ah ! hell and horror ! What voices are those, which wither my soul, as they fill my ear ?—

‘ What are these petrifying sounds that freeze my blood, and turn my heart into an icicle?—

‘ “ Henry, and Adelaide!—Husband ! wife! and daughter!—Saved, preserved, returned !”

‘ Furies of despair, are the thundering accents real? or has distraction seized my brain?—

‘ Yes! ’tis a damned reality.—My weapons turn upon myself.

‘ Fate, thou hast done thine utmost.—

‘ This is the instrument that shall prevent thy future wounds!—

‘ Welcome death!—welcome insensibility!—welcome annihilation!!’

CONCLUSION.

FANCY will readily supply the events that soon followed those happy and rapidly-succeeding discoveries which we have just related; and strike out upon her ideal canvas much of the future fortunes of the personages who have made the most conspicuous figures in our story.

In the following particulars, therefore, we mean only to *assist* her fairy pencil, by filling up the outline she may trace, with more minuteness than her own rapid sketches will allow.

SIR HENRY FITZMORDAUNT having proved his legal claim to the title and estates of which the departed impostor had so long deprived him, assumed his dignities and rights; and blessed with the society of his restored Adelaide, continued for many years to diffuse from Fitzmordaunt-castle, the venerable mansion of his ancestors, a portion of that happiness to all around him, with the enjoyment of which, Providence had vouchsafed to reward his virtue and resignation.

EDMUND and MARY, formed for each other by their kindred excellencies, were soon united, with the rapturous consent of those relatives, whose sanction alone was necessary for the happy purpose.

Residing at Herbert-Lodge with their mother, they were enabled to assist and extend her beneficent plans; as Mr. Fortescue had, from motives of conscience, as well as delicacy, insisted on

surrendering that estate to the rightful owner, of which he was satisfied his uncle had iniquitously deprived the late Mr. Herbert.

FREDERICK FAIRFORD having by absence, occupation, and the exercise of his reason, extinguished a passion, which burnt only with a hopeless flame; returned to his native country to cheer the latter days of his venerable parent; and by his presence and attention to assist the weakness of age, and soothe the pains of the closing scene of life.

The ardent attachment which he had entertained for Caroline Fitzmordaunt, was remembered as a dream of distant days; and had been long succeeded by a solid friendship for Mrs. Herbert, which was returned by her with reciprocal sincerity.

The excellent RECTOR of ROSEWOOD having been spared for a few years more, to reward the filial piety of Frederick,

and to bless his neighbourhood by his example as well as his precepts, at length gently “fell asleep” in the arms of his son, in the steady and joyful confidence of waking again to glory and immortality; to the enlarged exercise of every pious and benevolent affection; and the renewed enjoyment of every dear and virtuous attachment.

MR. FORTESCUE on Miss Wheatley's refusal of his hand and fortune, had again left his country, and once more resumed his favorite pursuit of travelling.

Here, interested by the novelty of fresh objects, and reflecting on the impropriety of indulging wishes which could not be realized, he gradually weaned his mind from the contemplation of Mary's charms; and when he returned to England, could meet her with no warmer sentiment than that of the most friendly esteem.

An intimacy took place between him and the family at Herbert-Lodge, which occasioned his more particular acquaintance with the amiable Harriet Stanmore.

Her elegant and cheerful manners soon engaged his regard, and the happiness which he experienced from his union with her, convinced him he had neither misplaced his affection, nor over-rated her excellence.

MATILDA, the lost Matilda, enjoyed but for a moment the dazzling scene of gaiety and splendour, for which she had sacrificed her honour and her peace. Her proud ambitious spirit panted for still higher distinctions than she yet enjoyed; and prompted by her suggestions, Phillippe Plassey engaged in intrigues, which in a short time involved both him and his fallen angel in one common ruin.

They were led to that guillotine, which had been moistened with the blood of

De Bourbon; where the terrors of approaching fate, the inextinguishable fears of an hereafter, and the pangs of disappointed ambition, combined to produce an agony in the soul of Matilda, the poignancy of which words cannot pourtray, nor imagination conceive. Her shriek of despair, and countenance of horror, as she mounted the engine of death, manifested the insufficiency of the principles she had adopted, to give fortitude to her mind, and support to her spirit, in the hour of trial.

A melancholy victim to a *false system of education*, she afforded an awful example of the danger as well as folly of cultivating the fancy at the expence of the understanding ; of gaining exterior graces by the neglect of mental accomplishment ; of sacrificing religious and moral sentiments on the altar of superficial acquirements; and lavishing that attention on personal attractions, which

should be directed to the regulations of the passions, and the improvement of the heart.

JACOB VINCENT, sincerely penitent for the part he had taken in the villainy of his brother, endeavoured to make the only amends in his power to those he had injured, by an earnest devotion to their future service.

Appointed by Edmund to the office of his bailiff, he served him with a fidelity that realized the sincerity of his professions; and living with Dame Wheatley and Jenny at the Dairy, every hour not given to his higher duties and his master's interest, was employed in affectionate attention to the enfeebled old woman, and in the expression of parental fondness for his daughter.

Happy in the society of her heart's best treasure, Edmund and his Mary; occupied in the constant exercise of philanthropy, and enjoying frequent inter

course with her brother and his amiable wife, the grateful heart of MRS. HERBERT was ever lifted up in silent praise to the beneficent Author of that felicity, which could not be increased on this side the grave.

The recollection of Matilda's fate, of which she had been apprized, would occasionally wring a sigh from her maternal bosom; but the contemplation of the blessings she had received, at length obliterated every pang.

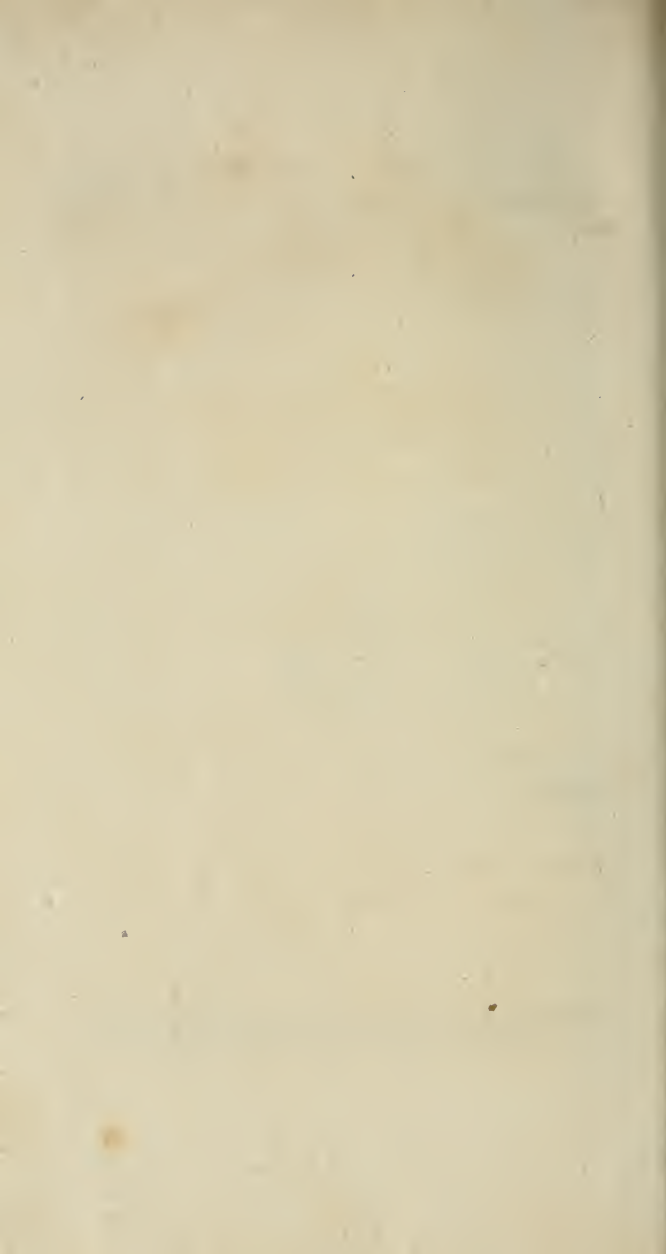
Tranquillity became the settled tenant of her soul.

Contentment gave rapidity to the flight of time; and the evening of her days stole upon her almost without observation, whilst it brought upon its wings that sweet serenity which is the sacred offspring of conscious rectitude, and rendered her to the last moment of her existence a bright example of *the*

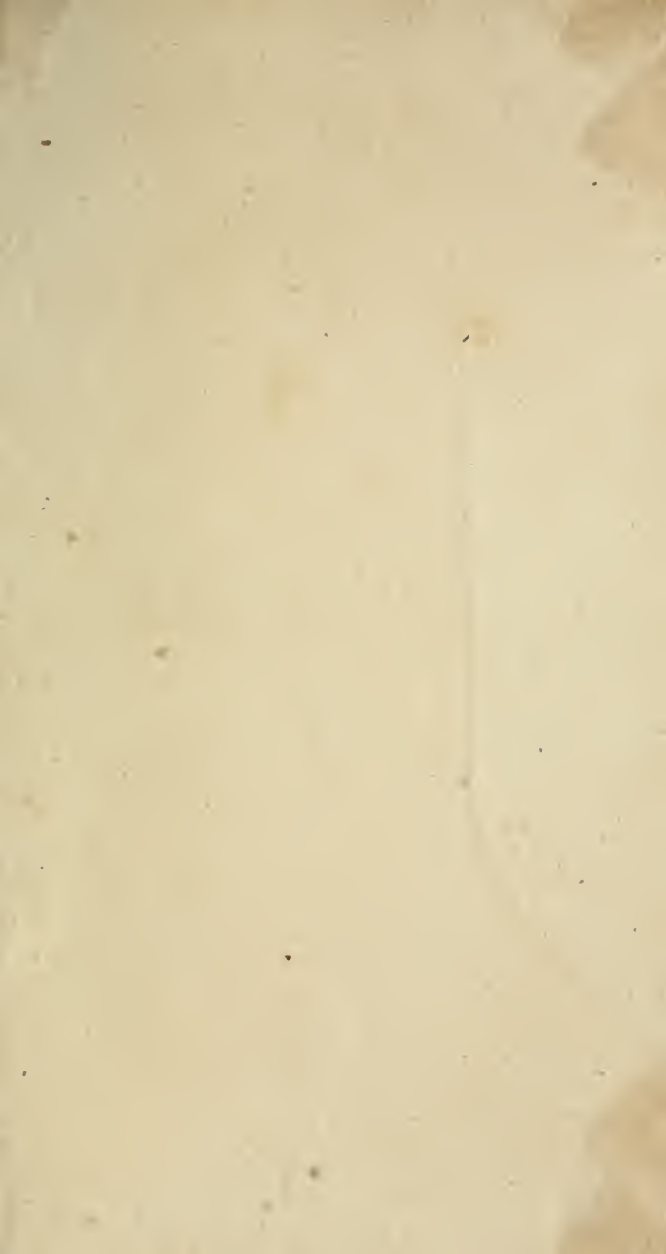
*efficacy of piety, virtue, and resignation,
in soothing all the bitterest afflictions, and
enhancing all the dearest joys of life.*

FINIS.









3 0112 088990145

